

SPIRITUAL FORMATION PROCESS THROUGH THE PARABLES OF  
JESUS IN THE CONTEXT OF KOREAN-CANADIAN IMMIGRANTS  
AS ALIENS

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To  
Kyoung Jin

“We are all pilgrims in search of the unknown”  
Paulo Coelho

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## ABSTRACT

“Beloved, I urge you as aliens and exiles” (1 Peter 2:11a). At the birth of Christianity, Apostle Peter understood his and other fellow Christians’ identity as aliens and exiles. Today, many young Korean immigrant Christians in Canada experience being in between two worlds – South Korea and Canada – belonging to both in some ways, but not wholly to either. This project will investigate what provides these young alien Christians a new identity, what makes their journey sacred and what forms their identity an empowering and redemptive one. This study will largely focus on Jesus’ parables and choose three from them to explore the spiritual formation process in the context of Korean-Canadian immigrants. Surveys were administered to two different groups to explore which ministry setting would be more effective: one with weekly Bible study and the other with the overnight retreat. A significant relationship was also found between the parables and the participants’ spiritual identity formation.

# CHAPTER ONE

## THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

### INTRODUCTION

Am I an American?  
No.  
Am I a Korean?  
No.  
Who am I?<sup>1</sup>

These were words on the wall of a Korean Church in New York City. Whether written on the church wall or not, it could be any multicultural Korean church in America's mission to help people - especially the younger generation - find their identity. Since the first Korean immigrants landed on Hawaiian soil in 1903 to work on the pineapple and sugar plantations, the Korean ethnic church has played a very significant role for Koreans in America. Almost 70 percent of Korean immigrants are affiliated with Korean ethnic churches and about 85 percent of those attend church regularly.<sup>2</sup> This shows the mission of Korean ethnic churches is very clear.

The context in Canada is very similar. They struggle with finding their identity in a foreign land. "Who am I?" and "Who will I be?" are the most frequently asked questions within themselves while wrestling to settle down in society.

According to *Statistics Canada* in 2007, the Korean community was the seventh

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<sup>1</sup> Jung Young Lee, *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 144.

<sup>2</sup> Kwang Sung Kim and Shin Kim, "The Ethnic Roles of Korean Immigrant Churches in the United States," in *Korean Americans and Their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore*, ed. Ho-Youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 71-73.

largest non-European ethnic group in the country, after the Chinese, East Indian, Filipino, Jamaican, Vietnamese and Lebanese.<sup>3</sup> According to South Korea's *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, there were 205,993 South Koreans living in Canada as of 2013, making them the fourth largest Korean diaspora population (after China, USA, and Japan).<sup>4</sup>

These Koreans living in Canada are very religious. In 2001, 51% of the Korean population belonged to either a mainline Protestant denomination or another Christian group, while 25% of the population was Catholic.<sup>5</sup> These numbers are worth noting as the percentage of Koreans in Canada who attend church is quite significant compared to other ethnic groups. There is a humorous saying: "When two Japanese meet, they set up a business firm; when two Chinese meet, they open a Chinese restaurant; and when two Koreans meet, they establish a church."<sup>6</sup>

Since most of the Korean population in Canada is affiliated with Korean ethnic churches, their longing to find a true identity in their foreign land is acute. One of the 1.5 generation Korean-Canadian pastors expresses his own struggle in this way:

The question of identity is difficult to answer. Who am I? Is this a question of "I" who has been, who is and who will be? Jesus is the same, yesterday, today and forever but unlike Jesus I am not the same. I change constantly. When I say, "I am a Canadian," what do I mean by it? Somebody once asked me, "If a Korean and a Canadian compete in the Olympics, who would you cheer for?" I have to decide one or the other. Is identity a matter of my decision? In that case, if I am a Canadian, then I am not a Korean and vice versa. For people like me who have always lived with a hyphenated identity, this is a dilemma. Often I hear people

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<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, *Profiles of Ethnic Communities in Canada: The Korean Community in Canada, 2001*, Cat. No. 89-621-XIE, No. 14 (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2007), accessed March 13, 2015, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-621-x/89-621-x2007014-eng.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013 *Jaeoe Dongpo Hyunhwang* (Statistics on Korean Immigrants 2013). Seoul, Republic of Korea: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed March 13, 2015, <http://www.mofa.go.kr/travel/overseascitizen>.

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada, *Profiles of Ethnic Communities in Canada*.

<sup>6</sup> Won Moo Hur and Kwang Chung Kim, "Religious Participation of Korean Immigrants in the United States," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 29, no. 1 (March 1990): 20.

say, “Go back to your country.” If you are not going to live like my kind of Canadian, go back to your country. But I don’t have a country to go back to. This is my country. This is where I live. This is where my children were born.<sup>7</sup>

There is a desperate yearning for ultimate meaning of life in their hearts. There is a deep hunger afoot for spiritual identity formation in their souls. They seek to satisfy this yearning, and a true Christian spirituality can invite them into the depths of a genuine way of living rooted in the mystery of God in their foreign land. This is where Christian spirituality comes to play.

## ISSUES

### *Christian Spirituality and Empty Space Versus Time*

There is a story about a university professor who came to a Zen master to ask him about Zen. Nan-in, the Zen master, served him tea. He poured his visitor’s cup full, and then kept pouring. The professor watched the overflow until he could no longer restrain himself. “It is over-full. No more will go in!” “Like this cup,” Nan-in said, “you are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I teach you Zen unless you first empty your cup?”<sup>8</sup>

Spirituality encompasses all aspects of human life, touched and influenced by one’s deepest beliefs concerning life’s meaning. Spirituality does not happen in a void, but rather it entails all aspects of human life. In this sense, a true Christian spirituality is to express living faith in a real world. Therefore, “abstract philosophical and theological

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<sup>7</sup> In Kee Kim, “In-Betweenness: We Strengthen Each Other by Challenging Each Other,” *Presbyterian Record* 134.4 (April 2010): 4, accessed March 17, 2015, <http://presbyterianrecord.ca/2010/04/01/in-betweenness/>.

<sup>8</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Spiritual Formation: Following the Movements of the Spirit* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2010), 3.

issues can rarely be separated from the larger political, economic, and cultural milieu...”<sup>9</sup>

Whether they have any interest in Christianity or other religions, immigrants have a strong sense of emptiness - emotionally, socioeconomically and relationally. In dealing with this emptiness, they try their best to fill in that empty space with many different things. *The American Time Use Survey* (data collected from 2004 - 2008) by the *National Bureau of Economic Research*, as well as the *Australian Time Use Survey 1992* show that sharp differences between the time use of immigrants and natives are very noticeable. These surveys show that immigrants spend more time than natives on certain categories - purchasing, education, work, care for others, household activities, personal care (such as sleeping) - where categories for work and household activities have the most differences. On the other hand, immigrants spend less time than natives on certain categories - leisure, socializing/television, eating/drinking - where category for socializing/television has the most difference.<sup>10</sup>

However, filling in the empty space can go many different ways. In terms of spiritual formation, Henri Nouwen notes, "...in the spiritual life, the word discipline means the effort to create some space in which God can act... In the spiritual life, discipline means to create that space in which something can happen that we hadn't planned or counted on."<sup>11</sup> As Nouwen rightfully notes, Christian spirituality is very closely related to that empty space. It is also very much true that Korean immigrants in Canada are searching for something to fill in their empty space in the foreign land.

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<sup>9</sup> Richard A. Horsley and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Message and the Kingdom: How Jesus and Paul Ignited a Revolution and Transformed the Ancient World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 189.

<sup>10</sup> Daniel S. Hamermesh and Stephen J. Trejo, 2010, *How Do Immigrants Spend Time?: The Process of Assimilation*, NBER working paper 16430, National Bureau of Economic Research, accessed March 13, 2015, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w16430.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, "Moving from Solitude to Community," *Leadership Journal* 16, no. 2 (Spring 1995), accessed March 17 2015, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/1995/spring/51280.html>.

Long before Nouwen, Blaise Pascal carefully considered this empty space as well. He refuted not only the Aristotelians, who held that a void was impossible (nature abhors a void), but also Descartes, who conceived the world to be completely full of swirling vortices of matter. In refuting the existence of the “full,” he helped make way for the modern view (later championed by Isaac Newton) that the universe consists almost entirely of empty space. He understood that inner human emptiness exists due to the absence of God. In his research into the nature of the void, he also realized its spiritual counterpart in human being. Within every human being he saw the emptiness and longing for happiness, genuine love and something of lasting value. This yearning is a Christ-shaped void, which only Jesus Christ could fill.<sup>12</sup>

In section VII of *Pensées* (Morality and Doctrine), he wrote,

That man without faith cannot know the true good, nor justice. All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end...And yet, after such a great number of years, no one without faith has reached the point to which all continually look. All complain, princes and subjects, noblemen and commoners, old and young, strong and weak, learned and ignorant, healthy and sick, of all countries, all times, all ages, and all conditions... A trial so long, so continuous, and so uniform, should certainly convince us of our inability to reach the good by our own efforts.<sup>13</sup>

Pascal thought that human beings try to fill the void in vain with everything around them, seeking things that are not there, help they cannot find, in those that are there. However, no one can change things, because this infinite abyss can only be filled

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<sup>12</sup> Romano Guardini, *Pascal for Our Time*, trans. Brian Thompson (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966), 33-34.

<sup>13</sup> Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. W. F. Trotter (1944; Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2002), accessed March 5, 2015, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/pascal/pensees.viii.html>.

with something that is infinite and unchanging - God.<sup>14</sup> He believed that only God fills the soul and the heart. This God makes one conscious of one's inward wretchedness, and unites Godself to one's innermost soul. This God then fills it with humility and joy, and also with confidence and love. Pascal, in other words, confessed that Jesus Christ is the end of all, and the center to which all tends.

Abraham Joshua Heschel also criticizes a human endeavor to fill in the empty space in vain.

Technical civilization is man's conquest of space. It is a triumph frequently achieved by sacrificing an essential ingredient of existence, namely, time. In technical civilization, we expend time to gain space. To enhance our power in the world of space is our main objective. Yet to have more does not mean to be more. The power we attain in the world of space terminates abruptly at the borderline of time. But time is the heart of existence.<sup>15</sup>

His point is very closely related to one of the most famous stories in the Bible. In the Gospel of John, chapter 4, Jesus came to a Samaritan city called *Sychar*. He was very tired from his long journey. Sitting by the well, he met a woman who came at noon. Women did not usually come to draw water from the well at noon, because it was scorching hot. Furthermore, no woman wanted to miss social gatherings, which most likely happened at the well around morning time. She was a marginalized woman; a stranger and an alien in the city.

However - or maybe because of this fact - she had a deep spiritual emptiness within herself. She was puzzled when Jesus, a Jewish man, asked a drink of her, a woman

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<sup>14</sup> In the same way, in the book of Job, God asks Job: "Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions?" (38:39)

<sup>15</sup> Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1951), 3.



of Samaria. Then Jesus said, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life” (John 4:13-14; NRSV). Jesus told her that the water he would give to her would fill her empty space.

Then the conversation went in a very strange direction. Suddenly, she asked about rightful worship spaces. “Our ancestors worshiped on *this mountain*, but you say that the place where people must worship is *in Jerusalem*” (John 4:20). She was looking for the right spatial place that would fill her emptiness in full, so she asked, “Is this the right place, or that place?” However, Jesus’ answer was striking, “Woman, believe me, *the hour* is coming when you will worship the Father *neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem*” (John 4:21). She asked a place, and Jesus answered time.

By the same token, if one tries to contain God in place (on this mountain or in Jerusalem), that endeavor is in vain. Israelites in the Old Testament tried to capture Yahweh in the golden calf. However, “Moses’ anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets from his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain” (Exodus 32:19). Israelites in the New Testament believed that God of universe communicated with human beings only through the temple in Jerusalem. However, Jesus said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19).

A false spirituality explains God as the one who resides in place at particular locations like mountains, forests and particular lands, but God answers, “I am who I am” (Exodus 3:14). A false spirituality associates holiness with things of place, but God answers “I am Emmanuel” (Matthew 1:23). A false spirituality is only able to see God in nature, but God answers, “I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of

history” (Exodus 3:6). A false spirituality believes it can grasp God in hand, but God answers “I am the Spirit like the wind that blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes” (John 3:8).

This awareness is especially important to immigrants’ Christian spirituality. As Psalm 137 is a lamentation over the destruction of Jerusalem (place), immigrants echo with the lyrics: “How could we sing the LORD’s song in a foreign land?” (Psalm 137:4). In this sense, if an immigrant life is only explained in terms of spatial place, then one’s spiritual endeavor to fill in the emptiness becomes in vain. True Christian spirituality of immigrants in a foreign land therefore must come from this awareness.

### ***Christian Spirituality and Journey***

Life is a journey. It is not about settlement but movement. It is about growth, change, discovery, transformation and maturity. Throughout this journey, one is continuously expanding one’s purpose to live, stretching one’s soul, learning to see more clearly and deeply one’s past and present, listening more attentively to one’s and others’ hearts, and taking challenges at every step along the way. Throughout this journey, one is shaping life’s unfolding story into a wonderful tale of growth, integrity, integration, beauty and triumph.

Life is a journey. Everything in it is a progress. It has a beginning, a middle and an end. All aspects of life are developing. Life is in motion. Without movement, advancement and progression, there will be no life. Once a thing has ceased to progress, it is called “dead.” Therefore, one is called a “pilgrim” and “sojourner.” This is one’s spiritual journey, from birth to maturity, inwardly a fervent connection with Christ,

upwardly a continual worship toward the Creator, outwardly a movement to the world, then questions and struggles, then a more seasoned recommitment.

The Bible is full of journeys: Abraham's journey to Canaan, Joseph's to Egypt, Moses' and Israelites' through the wilderness to the promised land, Israelite exiles' to Jerusalem after many decades of captivity in the city of Babylon, Jesus' to the cross and the resurrection, and Paul's to the three mission trips. God is the God of movements. "While the deities of other people were associated with places or things, the God of Israel was the God of events: the Redeemer from slavery, the Revealer of the Torah, manifesting Himself in events of history rather than in things or places."<sup>16</sup> So was Jesus' ministry. "He left that place and entered..." (Matthew 12:9), "...he departed" (Matthew 12:15), "Jesus left that place and went away..." (Matthew 15:21), "After Jesus had left that place, he passed along..." (Matthew 15:29), "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head" (Luke 9:58), and so many other instances. Following Jesus' way, Paul had three mission journeys, and confessed his life-long purpose of living as movements: "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me" (Philippians 3:12).

Apparently, these journeys were about a movement from one place to another. However, these journeys were not just about spatial changes. One's journey is more about identity. Everyone is a pilgrim on earth to the heaven. A pilgrim is a sojourner, not a settler. Paul understands his identity in this way and says, "But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ"

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<sup>16</sup> Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 7-8.

(Philippians 3:20).

Therefore, the movement of Jesus was not about places or localities. Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God was near, and this Kingdom was not about places but about God's reign in eternity. Comparing to world history, Jesus' movement started from the margin of the humble location in a subject state under the Roman Empire. It sprang up from the margin of world history. It was not about localities or places, but about movement and journey. It had so much mysterious power and, like the wind blows where it chooses, it took the journey. Even so, when it became the state religion of the Roman Empire (movement being spatialized), it was slowly losing its mysterious power that came from eternity (time).

“Aslan is on the move. The Witch's magic is weakening...” Edmund could at last listen to the other noise properly. A strange, sweet, rustling, chattering noise...It was the noise of running water...And his heart have a great leap (though he hardly knew why) when he realized that the frost was over...And now the snow was really melting in earnest and patches of green grass were beginning to appear in every direction.<sup>17</sup>

Christians live in-between: in a place between heaven and earth. Their lives as the frost don't move. Their lives as the frozen water are static. Suddenly, however, Aslan is on the move. Suddenly, Jesus is on the move, and enters this world and into our heart. Then Christians become pilgrims and take the journey. Then Christians hear the noise of movements - strange, sweet, rustling and chattering noise of running water. The frost is being thawed, and patches of green grass appear in every direction of their journey. Jesus is on the move, so that every creation is on the move with him.

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<sup>17</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1950), quoted in Charles Foster, *The Sacred Journey: The Ancient Practices* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 53.

By the same token, spiritual formation is a process. It is a journey and a pilgrimage. Spiritual formation is about movements - from things that enslave one to liberation/freedom. In this regard, Nouwen rightfully notes the following:

The movements...may vary with the individual and with one's season of life and community of faith; they are never static, absolute, or perfectly completed, as if we must graduate from one movement to another before continuing our journey. Rather, we remain in motion and in the process of discerning which way the wind of God is actively blowing in our lives.<sup>18</sup>

No one can achieve this overnight. One must come through his/her own dark night of the soul: ups and downs. On the journey, spiritual formation seeks our authentic change (transformation), through the mysterious works of the Holy Scripture and the Holy Spirit. Though it never happens in a vacuum. Spiritual formation is very much personal, but never private. There is inward movement of the formation, but it is more than that: it is a dynamic movement that encompasses outward, upward, and inward.

### ***Aliens and Their Historical Background***

An American-born Japanese American, Joann Miyamoto, once expressed in her poem about her strangeness in the still foreign country.

When I was young  
Kids used to ask me  
What are you?  
I'd tell them what my mom told me  
I'm an American  
chin chin Chinaman  
You are a Jap!  
flashing hot inside  
I'd go home

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<sup>18</sup> Nouwen, *Spiritual Formation*, VIII - IX.

my mom would say  
 don't worry  
 he that walks alone  
 walks faster<sup>19</sup>

A ten-year old Korean-American girl from Orange County, California, expressed her identity struggle this way: "In this country I feel like a stranger. If I returned to Korea, I would be a stranger there, too. But then who am I? I hope someday I will know the answer to this question."<sup>20</sup> Korean immigrants experience being in between two worlds, belonging to both in some ways, but not wholly belonging to either. They have a strong sense of being a stranger, an alien and a pilgrim.

Long before these Korean-Canadian immigrants, Abraham experienced the same. He obeyed and left home when he was called: "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place...not knowing where he was going. By faith he stayed for a time in a land...as in a foreign land" (Hebrews 11:8-9). His descendants of faith followed the same way: "All of these died in faith...They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland" (Hebrews 11:13-14).

Most immigrants, however, do not come to Canada consciously thinking of themselves as pilgrims of faith. They usually come here for mundane reasons, such as for a better quality of life, for a better education for their children, for a better financial future, to name a few. Nonetheless, the pilgrimage as aliens emerges as they inevitably face their uprootedness that results from emigration. "Is there any meaningfulness in

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<sup>19</sup> Jung Young Lee, *Marginality*, 44.

<sup>20</sup> Sang Hyun Lee, "Pilgrimage and Home in the Wilderness of Marginality: Symbols and Context in Asian American Theology," in *Asian Americans and Christian Ministry*, ed. Inn Sook Lee and Timothy D. Son (Seoul, Korea: Voice Publishing House, 1999), 77.

living as an alien in this foreign land?” they start asking themselves. They live long in a foreign land, yet they remain aliens. They are caught between two cultures and languages.

However, this struggle shouldn’t be considered all negative. If they are able to see the immigrants’ uprootedness as an opportunity to embark on a sacred journey like Abraham and his descendants did long before, then a life in a foreign land as strangers and aliens can be much more meaningful. If they are able to see their marginality as a mysterious site of radical openness and possibility, then their spiritual journey can be a redemptive and reconciling one, as they become capable of solidarity with other strangers and aliens.

Summing up the tragic events of 1992 in Los Angeles, Sang Hyun Lee<sup>21</sup> emphasizes self-conscious strangers (aliens). “Being consciously at the margin of the society gave them the capacity to become aware of others at the margin; this capacity was also a capacity for solidarity... Creative and redemptive events can occur at the in-between and often despised margins of this world.”<sup>22</sup>

In the same vein, it will be beneficial to analyze this Post-Christendom era. Canadian theologian Douglas John Hall states,

To say that Christianity in the world at large is undergoing a major transition is to indulge in understatement. What is happening is nothing less than the winding down of a process that was inaugurated in the fourth century of the common era... Although some semblance of Christendom may find a new home in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, its period of Western dominance is over.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> He is a retired professor of systematic theology in Princeton Theological Seminary.

<sup>22</sup> Sang Hyun Lee, *Asian Americans and Christian Ministry*, 83.

<sup>23</sup> Douglas John Hall, *The End of Christendom and the Future of Christianity* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997), 1-2.

In this sense, we better think of the contemporary church and Christianity as “diaspora” rather than as an institution. Diaspora is a dispersion of a people and people on journey, so that this era can be much more opportunistic. This is more positive reformulation than the resignation or defeatism of seeing Christendom’s end as chaotic. In this sense, as explained above, Christian spirituality can be understood as “fluid” and “journey” rather than structured.

It is true that Christendom has set up certain correlations, a complex set of assumptions, about the association between the realms of politics, geography, church, spirituality and mission. As a result, the gospel has become politicized, regionalized, racialized and even colonized.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, the remnants of Christendom in Christians today tend to be abusive and elitist in many different ways. However, as they live in a Post-Christendom era, they must shift their paradigm to “incarnate marginality,” meaning they should acknowledge that their proper place, both as individuals and as the church, is not necessarily at the center. It is the margin rather than center, the valley rather than the hilltop, and the cross rather than the throne.<sup>25</sup> In this sense, there is real hope in Christianity that the end of Christendom can spell the beginning of a new flowering of Christianity. This new flowering of Christianity is not entirely a new phenomenon. However, it goes back to where the early Christians were situated in the society and to when they identified themselves so differently than their contemporaries.

The early Christians had this strong sense of being aliens in a world where there was no Christendom yet. They courageously took the journey as strangers and aliens in

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<sup>24</sup> Justo L. González, *The Changing Shape of Church History* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2002), 52.

<sup>25</sup> González, *The Changing Shape of Church History*, 153.



this world, while seeking their true homeland. One of the early Christian writings, *Epistle to Diognetus* (estimated dates between AD 130 to the late second century), tells about how the early Christians were known to the world. Especially chapter five, *The Church in the World*, says,

For Christians cannot be distinguished from the rest of the human race by country or language or customs. They do not live in cities of their own; they do not use a peculiar form of speech; they do not follow an eccentric manner of life. This doctrine of theirs has not been discovered by the ingenuity or deep thought of inquisitive men, nor do they put forward a merely human teaching, as some people do. Yet, although they live in Greek and barbarian cities alike, as each man's lot has been cast, and follow the customs of the country in clothing and food and other matters of daily living, at the same time they give proof of the remarkable and admittedly extraordinary constitution of their own commonwealth. They live in their own countries, but only as *aliens*.<sup>26</sup>

The early Christians were known as “aliens” to their contemporaries. Not only from this historical evidence, but also there are quite a few other biblical ones where the Christians identified themselves as “aliens.”

Apostle Peter urges his fellow Christians: “Beloved, I urge you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11). Apostle Paul understands their heavenly citizenship: “But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20). The Epistle to the Hebrews agrees with this: “They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth” (Hebrews 11:13b).

However, this identity understood by the early Christians was not new. This

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<sup>26</sup> Cyril C. Richardson, ed., *Early Christian Fathers: newly translated and edited by Cyril C. Richardson; in collaboration with Eugene R. Fairweather, Edward Rochie Hardy, Massey Hamilton Shepherd, Jr.*, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), accessed March 20, 2015, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.x.i.ii.html>. (Italic bold added)

resident alien topos is also found in the Old Testament. Abraham is repeatedly characterized as an alien and stranger: “I (Abraham) am a stranger and an alien residing among you” (Genesis 23:4a). Before Abraham, Cain built a city but Abel built none, so that Augustine in *The City of God* understands, “When these cities began to run their course by a series of deaths and births, the citizen of this world (Cain) was the first-born, and after him the stranger in this world (Abel), the citizen of the city of God, predestined by grace, elected by grace, by grace a stranger below, and by grace a citizen above...”<sup>27</sup>

This alien identity, however, does not always lead one to some God-desiring destination: a call, purpose of life, promised land and homeland. Being an alien does not automatically make one to be a spiritual pilgrim to this ultimate destination. Then, what makes the identity of being aliens empowering and redemptive one, rather than passive or feeling of being lost? Furthermore, if spiritual formation “concerns the quest for a fulfilled and authentic Christian existence,”<sup>28</sup> what gives this alien an abundant life (John 10:10)? If spiritual formation is seen as the way of the heart - the way from bondage to freedom - what makes this alien to be like the first-century disciples, who were free to sojourn great distances and boldly speak the Word of God?<sup>29</sup>

As noted briefly above, it happens only for self-conscious aliens. When one is not only at the margin of the society, but also is conscious of one’s true identity in this world. Being an alien himself in this world, Jesus was always conscious of his true identity in the midst of ovation and rejection by his own people. He remembered and carried

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<sup>27</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *City of God* 15:1 (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers [NPNF], 2:284-85), quoted in Benjamin H. Dunning, *Aliens and Sojourners: Self as Other in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 2.

<sup>28</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1999), 2.

<sup>29</sup> Nouwen, *Spiritual Formation*, XXVIII - XXIX.

wherever he went this one voice from above: “You are my beloved; with you I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). An alien must be able to articulate inner events, which means to enter the center of one’s existence and become familiar with the complexities of his/her inner lives.<sup>30</sup>

By the grace of the Holy Spirit and of the Holy Scripture, this will only be possible. Especially in terms of the Scripture, an alien can rediscover “the New Testament assertion that the purpose of theological endeavor is not to describe the world in terms that make sense, but rather to change lives, to be re-formed in light of the stunning assertions of the gospel.”<sup>31</sup> This point leads us to the next issue.

### ***Aliens and the Bible Narratives***

A Christian journey is about living in a strange new world rather than in a familiar old world. In a familiar old world, one sets course on a journey, and pretty much predicts the journey’s destination. In a strange new world, however, one does not fully understand what’s waiting on the journey, and accepts a possibility that setting courses may not always lead to the planned destination.

Life in a familiar old world is a life of settlement. Even though to live as slaves in Egypt was very tough at first, once the Israelites were used to it, they wanted to go back to the bondage out of freedom: “If only we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you (Moses) have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger” (Exodus

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<sup>30</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1972), 38.

<sup>31</sup> Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 28.

16:3).

Babylonian exile was also similar. After Jerusalem was finally razed in 587 B.C.E., humiliation of living as exiles on the foreign soil began. However, the exile Jews were allowed to live in their own settlements in the capital and other Babylonian cities. They were allowed to build houses, earn a living, and even to observe their own Jewish religion and customs. After years of living as exiles, they were able to rise to high positions in public service. Much later when there was an opportunity to return to their homeland, Jerusalem, many of them refused to do so, because they had sunk roots in the foreign soil, and Jerusalem held no allure for them.<sup>32</sup>

One of the most tragic dangers in spirituality for exiles is to become too preoccupied with self so that one cannot step outside oneself to rethink, reimagine, and redescribe larger reality - larger reality of self, of one's spirituality, of society, and even of God. If one's spirituality is of settlement, one tries to confine God to a place. In this sense, the Jews in the Bible tried to confine God in the city of Jerusalem and its temple, and believed God of universe only entered through these places. A confined God is a familiar God, and there is no strangeness, mystery and awe. No wonder Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19).

However, if one's spirituality is of movement, one sojourns continuously.<sup>33</sup> It is a life of a pilgrim, of an alien, and of a stranger in this world. Even though the life as a fisherman was familiar and comfortable, when Peter and Andrew heard the voice of

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<sup>32</sup> Michael Frost, *Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), 8-9.

<sup>33</sup> St. Benedict made vow of stability as essence of spiritual life. In this sense, spiritual movement does not necessarily mean that it is desirable for one to sojourn from one place to another place to achieve one's spiritual growth/formation. Spiritual movement more importantly includes "space" as well.

Jesus, saying “Follow me,” they left their nets and followed Jesus (Matthew 4:19-20).

Even if the life at Haran was familiar and secured, when Abram heard the voice of God, saying “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you” (Genesis 12:1), he took the journey.

In the same vein, this alien understands God is strange and mysterious, rather than a familiar and predictable one. God left the familiar heaven and took the journey to this world. “Jesus Christ is the supreme act of divine intrusion into the world’s settled arrangements. In the Christ, God refuses to “stay in his place.””<sup>34</sup> Jesus was the ultimate alien. While knowing equality with God, he humbled and allowed himself to be an alien on the earth. He entered fully into life on Jewish soil in the Roman Empire, but didn’t give himself over to it completely. An alien’s journey becomes an adventure “with many unknowns, internal arguments over which turn to take in the road, conversations along the way, visits to strange places, introductions and farewells, and much looking back and taking stock.”<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, aliens are always on the move. It is a pilgrimage. They are always in movement. For that reason, in the process of spiritual formation, they are not able to carry many things, the things that are from places. They carry stories. They carry memories of those stories. On the journey, whenever they face danger, they remember the strongest story they hold in their hearts, and that is the Story of God. To the Israelites who were now on the move, God wanted them to remember this story wherever they went:

When your children ask you in time to come, ‘What is the meaning of the decrees and the statutes and the ordinances that the Lord our God has commanded you?’

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<sup>34</sup> Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 51.

<sup>35</sup> Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 52.

then you shall say to your children, ‘We were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. The Lord displayed before our eyes great and awesome signs and wonders against Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his household. He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land that he promised on oath to our ancestors. Then the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our lasting good, so as to keep us alive, as is now the case (Deuteronomy 6:20-24).

In this sense, for aliens’ spiritual formation on the journey, the Bible is the foremost important agency. The Bible is recognized by all Christians as being of foundational importance for their spiritual formation. This becomes true when one looks at the Bible in terms of time and space, as discussed above. “The Bible is more concerned with time than with space. It sees the world in the dimension of time. It pays more attention to generations, to events, than to countries, to things; it is more concerned with history than with geography. To understand the teaching of the Bible, one must accept its premise that time has a meaning for life...”<sup>36</sup>

In this sense, the Bible is fundamentally all about a story of God’s people’s journey with God<sup>37</sup> - movements of aliens on the journey that always carry the story. The Gospel smells full of the road and the road is full of stories. In these stories, God takes the disconnected elements of lives as aliens in a foreign land, and pull them together into a coherent story - the story of God (big story) with God’s people - that means something. When an alien carries fragmented stories (small stories) all over one’s foreign soils, one’s life is disconnected from the true meaning of life. However, one’s once fragmented small stories are coherently connected with the big story of God in the Bible narratives, one’s life journey becomes much more meaningful.

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<sup>36</sup> Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 7.

<sup>37</sup> Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 53.

The above biblical reference from Deuteronomy 6:20-24 tells that the people of God are people who continuously learn this big story by heart and gather regularly to retell the story.<sup>38</sup> By telling and carrying this story on the journey, aliens come to realize coherence of their lives, and are closely connected with God's big story. It is not about their heroic stories that give a true meaning to their lives, but about God's redemptive big story that holds small stories in the story, connect them with it, and gives a birth of new interpretation for their life journey.

Aliens face dangers on their journey in a foreign and strange land - identity crisis, financial challenge, social uprootedness, feelings of isolation, alienation and inner void. Therefore, they are driven back to their most dangerous memories that come from the big story. When the stakes are high, as aliens living on foreign soil, they must fall back on their most potent memories. No wonder that "remember" is one of the most repeated commandments of God to God's people on the journey in the Bible. As Jesus resisted the temptation of Satan to forget the story of God, aliens resist forgetting but refashion potent memories in their context.

An illustration of potent memories can be found in Stanley Hauerwas' work, *A Community of Character*. In interpreting Richard Adam's beautiful tale about traveling rabbits, *Watership Down*, he understands that the rabbits' purpose of life is not to try to make their world safe, but rather to learn to live in a dangerous world by trusting in stories.

I suspect it is not accidental that this is the first story told by the rabbits that left Sandleford, as all new communities must remind themselves of their origin. A people are formed by a story which places their history in the texture of the world.

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<sup>38</sup> Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 54.

Such stories make the world our home by providing us with the skills to negotiate the dangers in our environments in a manner appropriate to our nature.<sup>39</sup>

The community that the traveling rabbits are building is a story-formed community, and it is the stories that spur them on, driving them forward to the safety of Watership Down.

By the same token, aliens are a story-formed community. They are formed by the dangerous stories of God and the Son, Jesus Christ. “Just as the rabbits’ instinct is to stop and dig, so too our very human instinct is to embrace safety, warmth, and security. Our all-too-human impulses push us toward being untroubled.”<sup>40</sup> What will get them up and out of their safe warrens is the radical stories of the Bible. They carry Abraham’s story that journeyed forth a place he didn’t know, based his immigrant life on something he couldn’t see, and took his place in a journey without exact destination. On the journey, they carry other stories, not about heroic people but a heroic God who made lives great: stories of Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, the Prophets, John the Baptist, the disciples, Paul, to name a few. This story-telling God takes the journey with aliens, helps them pick up their small pieces of little stories, and connects them with God’s bigger and greater story.

### ***The Parables***

Jesus carried stories wherever he went on his journey, and his parables are among the best-known and most influential stories in the world. Jesus was the master creator of story. Children do not say, “Tell me some facts,” but rather “Tell me some stories.”

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<sup>39</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), quoted in Michael Frost, *Exiles*, 13.

<sup>40</sup> Frost, *Exiles*, 13.



Stories - especially good ones - allow people to see reality, at least the reality the author creates. “Life on the outside virtually stops; we are taken up in the story. The storyteller is in control so that we are forced to see from new angles and so that the message cannot be easily evaded. Hearers become willing accomplices, even if the message is hostile. From this “other world” we are invited to understand, evaluate, and, hopefully, redirect our lives.”<sup>41</sup>

Then what is a parable? The first century grammarian Theon of Alexandria defined the genre of fable (*mythos*) that includes parable, as “a fictitious saying picturing truth.”<sup>42</sup> Fables and parables are stories with intent that create an imaginary world that reflects reality, and hopefully again, bigger reality. These stories prompt new thinking, new perspective and interpretation for one’s life. C. H. Dodd also offers a very comprehensive definition. “At its simplest the parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought.”<sup>43</sup> As the world aliens are facing is strange and foreign, the world in parables is also strange and mysterious. Parables urge hearers to “participate in” the world parables are picturing, and by doing so there must be a clash between the two different worlds: hearers’ world that is experienced and known versus the world in parables that is strange and mysterious. In hearing Jesus’ parables, one cannot but experience the clash between one’s established world and the Kingdom of God. Every hearer then stands on the two roads

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<sup>41</sup> Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 1.

<sup>42</sup> Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 8.

<sup>43</sup> C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1961), 5, quoted in John R. Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable: Metaphor, Narrative, and Theology in the Synoptic Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 5.

diverged in one's life - accept the Kingdom or reject it: "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 11:15; Mark 4:9, 23; Luke 8:8).

The Hebrew word *mashal* corresponds to the Greek *parabole*, meaning "an allusive narrative which is told for an ulterior purpose."<sup>44</sup> Parables indirectly communicate the teller's ultimate intent to lead hearers to reality and truth. In this sense, parables of Jesus are handles for deeper and better understanding about his teachings on the Kingdom of God. In line of this, Klyne Snodgrass explains Søren Kierkegaard's understanding of parables in this way:

[D]irect communication is important for conveying information, but learning is more than information, especially when people think they already understand. People set their defenses against direct communication and learn to conform its message to the channels of their understanding of reality. Indirect communication finds a way in a back window and confronts what one thinks is reality. Parables are indirect communication.<sup>45</sup>

Karl Barth also understands that the Bible narrative can lead the hearers to other world: in his expression, "the strange new world within the Bible." In his own parable, there is a group of men and women in a huge warehouse. They were born, grew up, and had everything for their comfort in there. There are no exits but windows. However, the windows are thick with dust, so that no one bothers to look "out." One day, however, one child drags a stepstool under one of the windows, scrapes off the grime and looks out where people are walking outside on the street. People in the warehouse are gathered around the window, and notice one person outside looks up and points to the sky. People in the warehouse tries to look up but are only able to see the roof. They soon get tired of

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<sup>44</sup> Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 8.

<sup>45</sup> Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 8.

watching people and the world outside, and get back to their comfortable and predictable life in the warehouse. But what would happen, Barth asks, if one day one of those children cut a door out of the warehouse, coaxed his friends out, and discovered the “other world”?<sup>46</sup> That is exactly what happens when one opens the Bible: one listens to the stories of Jesus, enters into the strange new world called Kingdom of God on earth, and finds the true meaning of life as a journey to the homeland, as well as an authentic identity in this world. That is what aliens need to do.

Then how many of Jesus’ parables are in the New Testament? Arguably, there are fifty-five parables of Jesus in the books of Matthew, Mark and Luke. If similar parables are combined, there are thirty-eight parables. Thirty-three out of fifty-five (60%) have four verses or less, while nine (16%) have ten verses or more.<sup>47</sup> Amazingly, the parables make up about 35% of Jesus’ teaching in the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>48</sup> In addition, as noted above, Jesus’ parables urge hearers’ active participation and engagement. Twenty-two of them start with a question such as “Who from you...?” “What do you think?” or “How...?” Other parables have questions at the end of the story.<sup>49</sup> Jesus’ parables put a mirror in front of a hearer, urging one to face one’s true self, hidden motives, and own small world, and then ask, “Now you have heard (= seen). So what are you going to do (= live)?” The parables invite hearers to put both their feet in the strange new world.

This paper later will further consider a few chosen parables to investigate the spiritual formation process through the parables in the context of Korean-Canadian young

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<sup>46</sup> Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1978 [first published in 1928]), 28-50, quoted in Eugene H. Peterson, *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 6-7.

<sup>47</sup> Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 17.

<sup>48</sup> Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 22.

<sup>49</sup> Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 18.

immigrants as being aliens. Before that, it will be helpful to see how a story can be interpreted in terms of one's identity's spiritual formation. As aliens struggle with their identity in a foreign land the most, and as a story guides them to the strange new world so that they can find the ultimate purpose of life, this example can offer a glimpse of what the parables of Jesus do to them.

One of the most famous fables of all time is the *Three Little Pigs*. As one can imagine, fables are allegories, and the beasts they feature, wild or domestic, have never been zoologically correct. They are intended and understood to represent individual persons. In this story, there are three little pigs and the wolf. A wolf in most fables in general is sly, but pigs are much more complicated characters, that ugly or cute, stupid or clever, and unclean or sacred. Furthermore, the houses the three little pigs built are symbolic of identity (re)formulation: from lean-to shack to a wooden house and finally to a house of solid brick. In addition, these three little pigs are not necessarily seen as separate ones: they can be one person in different identity development stages. This becomes clearer when we listen to their answers to the wolf in the same words: "No, no, not by the hair of my chinny chin chin."<sup>50</sup>

All three pigs are little ones, thus immature. As one reads the story, one senses the progression of identity through the three little pigs. From this perspective, the houses become a metaphor for identity formation in different stages.

The first pig chose to build his house of straw, which was cheap and easy to clump into desired shapes. His identity was too fragile. Thus, when the wolf, a metaphor for bad circumstances or the tough world itself, huffed and puffed on to the fragile

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<sup>50</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 45-46.

identity, it quickly became debris and was eaten up, like the house built on sand (Matt. 7:26-27). In terms of an alien's identity formation, it may represent an early period of life in one's familiar native land, before one becomes an alien in a foreign land. Or regarding the biblical characters, it may exemplify Jacob's first stage of life - led by his own will - in Canaan with his family: with all the attachments, mistakes, tricks and most of all rivalry competition (Genesis 25:19 - 27:40).

The middle one built his house with a little more integrity – out of sticks. Now, the pig showed some growth in trying to build a somewhat more substantial house than the first one. Even so, it was still fragile. Thus, when some bad circumstances arrived and huffed and puffed, his identity was shivered and shook, and soon became broken sticks, like broken identity and shattered self-esteem. Or in terms of an alien identity (re)formulation, it can mean, after uprootedness, a middle stage of struggles to find one's new but authentic identity on a strange soil. In the case of Jacob, it represented his 20 years of uprootedness - as a fugitive - away from his homeland and family in Haran (Genesis 27:41 - 30:43).

The third little pig chose to build his house of bricks, even though bricks were harder to acquire and integrate into a completed whole. He wanted his identity to be substantial and strong, like the house built on the rock (Matt. 7:24-25), because he knew about the wolf, "Now the wolf won't catch me and eat me." He already anticipated that there were unexpected bad circumstances along his spiritual journey. Thus, when bad circumstances huffed and puffed, his identity settled more firmly upon its foundation. The wolf was frustrated and very angry. In this case, one can identify this angry wolf with one's spiritual enemy, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls

around like a roaring lion looking for someone to *devour*” (1 Pet. 5:8). The wolf climbed onto the roof and crawled down the chimney, only to destroy the pig’s identity. However, the third little pig, more mature, did not panic in the face of this tough circumstance, and finally defeated it and secured his identity. From this experience, his identity became more integrated and substantial. The third little pig may represent an alien finding authentic identity from the entire process of spiritual formation in a foreign land. Regarding Jacob, it may represent his last stage of life - led by God’s will - in Canaan and immigration to Egypt: detachments, reconciliation, and the name changed from Jacob to Israel (Genesis 31:1 - 49:33).

Especially between the last two stages, aliens are searching for authentic identity and place in the strange new world. They struggle with ultimate questions: “Why am I living in this world?” and “What am I living for?” They are wandering all over the places without having any concrete knowledge about where they are going or wanting to go. Hopefully, like the third little pig, they may learn how to build their identity with bricks, even if it takes longer and demands great energy and commitment. They have to progress throughout their lives and learn from previous mistakes, that of building identities of straw and of wooden sticks. This is a life-long journey, from a trail of rough stones, through the threat of wild beasts, and into the highlands where tough grasses grow. This is a spiritual journey and, just as “little” Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings* learns his call/vocation as well as his weaknesses, aliens are becoming more mature, so that they may say, “We will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ” (Ephesians 4:15).

### *Aliens and Their Community*

Like the little hobbit Frodo had the companions (i.e., a fellowship of nine companions) on his journey to the foreign land *Mordor*, these aliens don't walk alone but journey together with their community. In the story of *Watership Down*, the rabbits are also a story-formed community. In the story of the Bible, the aliens are likewise a story-formed community. The journey of all aliens is personal but never private. Their spiritual formation happens within a context of their community. An absence of this communal aspect would "reduce spiritual formation to little more than religious self-help"<sup>51</sup> as "(O)ther people are one of the most important sources of God's grace in our lives."<sup>52</sup>

Jesus was an alien. He left his homeland and mother tongue in the Kingdom above. He left his status, all for love's sake: "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son..." (John 3:16) Likewise Apostle Peter declares that "Christians are to live as aliens and strangers in the world (1 Peter 2:11)."<sup>53</sup> However, human history proves that aliens and strangers often go through either assimilation/absorption, rejection/exclusion and/or elimination. Apostle Paul therefore declares that "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

The Bible contains stories of individuals. It is the story of "a people" and their journey with God. Each story is fragmented, disconnected and contained in the realm of personal journeys. Even so "(I)n scripture, we see that God is taking the disconnected

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<sup>51</sup> James C. Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 22.

<sup>52</sup> Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*, 177.

<sup>53</sup> Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Steve Kang, and Gary A. Parrett, *A Many Colored Kingdom: Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 39.

elements of our lives and pulling them together into a coherent story that means something.”<sup>54</sup> As each individual’s story of spiritual journey that was once fragmented is connected to a coherent big story, pieces from each alien’s story can be picked up and continued within the big coherent story of God.

As previously mentioned, this alien’s community is not necessarily about spatial place. Aliens make up a story-formed community, and the most important aspect in this community is “remembering” and “retelling” the story over generations (Deuteronomy 6:20-24). In this way, this story-formed community is also a time-formed community. Throughout their history, the Jews knew better than anyone about what it meant to lead an alien’s community life. That’s why keeping their Sabbath is the most crucial element in forming their spiritual identity.

Not only does each Jew know that all those in the shtetl [small village] are sharing his Sabbath experience. He feels, beyond that, a community with Jews who are celebrating the Sabbath all over the world. This is a major strand in the Sabbath feeling - a sense of proud and joyous identification with the tradition, the past, the ancestors, with all the Jewish world living or gone. On the Sabbath the shtetl feels most strongly and most gladly that “it is good to be a Jew.”<sup>55</sup>

By the same token, by ceasing work – creating an inner space – and concentrating on spiritual resting time, aliens can create room for their spiritual formation that embraces people rather than things, cherishes time rather than place, and pursues the intimacy of Christian community.

However, what kind of community are aliens building and belonging to? Jesus

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<sup>54</sup> Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 53.

<sup>55</sup> Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, *Life Is with People: The Culture of the Shtetl* (New York: Schocken Books, 1952), 48, quoted in Marva J. Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 111-112.



was an alien, but was never isolated. He had the communities - twelve disciples, 120 followers, a group of women, for example. His home was in heaven above, but another home was below on earth as well. Similarly, even though immigrant Christian aliens' ultimate home is in above, they are not isolated in below. They need a home in their strange new world. As previously mentioned, Statistics Canada shows that in the Korean-Canadian community it is the ethnic church that has played a greater role in meeting this need for belonging than any other institution.<sup>56</sup> The church is their homeland in below.

This community is unique in a sense that aliens are gathered together, that they are not defined as Koreans nor Canadians but a new synthesis of the two ("neither Jew nor Greek"), and that they concentrate more on time rather than place. The early Christians were called "the third race," since their contemporaries were not able to define their identity in terms of what was being used at that time. The early Christians were in-between, and immigrant Christian aliens are in-between too, and this "in-betweenness" has a name. One Korean-American woman once put it this way:

I thank God for making the rainbow, the rainbow with beautiful primary colors and lots of in-between colors. When we mix red and yellow, we have orange... Yet orange is not red, orange is not yellow. Orange is another color with its own name and its own color. I am the "In-between." In-between colors have names, too.<sup>57</sup>

This community is not about a safe and familiar place of belongingness, where those who are different are not present. In this community, there is a deeper unity underneath the surface of all the differences.

The community of the aliens is not a place but a time-formed one, and in this

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<sup>56</sup> Sang Hyun Lee, *Asian Americans and Christian Ministry*, 84.

<sup>57</sup> Sang Hyun Lee, *Asian Americans and Christian Ministry*, 85-86.

sense it is a spirit. This community of spirit is not the same as “community spirit” or groupism, but rather, spirit like wind: “I am the Spirit like the wind that blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes” (John 3:8).

In investigating this time-formed unique community of Christian aliens, it is beneficial to understand the concept of “liminality.”<sup>58</sup> The pioneer anthropologist Arnold van Gennep published his *Rites de Passage* (Rites of Passage) in 1909. While identifying the various categories of rites in small-scale tribal societies, he found that there are three universal stages to such rites: separation (preliminal rites), liminality (transition rites), and reintegration (rites of incorporation). Between these stages, a change of status for an individual and/or social group happens.

In a tribal society, when young men reach a certain age, they are removed (separated) from mainstream society while they undergo the ordeal of induction into adult life. At this stage, the initiands enter into a metaphorical death, as they are forced to leave their previous practices and routines behind. During this period of separation, they are considered no longer children but not yet adults. This period is called “liminality” by van Gennep. This “liminal stage is a stage of transition, a period that is neither one thing nor the other.”<sup>59</sup> They stand at the threshold, between their previous way of structuring their identity and community, and a new way that the rite of passage will establish. Later, another anthropologist, Victor Turner, focused on this second stage, and understood liminality as “a stage in which the (initiands) live for an extended period in a spatial,

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<sup>58</sup> From Latin word *limen*, meaning “a threshold.”

<sup>59</sup> Frost, *Exiles*, 109.

social, and spiritual threshold.”<sup>60</sup> After a period in this threshold, they are reintegrated into a society with a new status and with a new identity.

At the threshold (liminality), the depth of community is immense. The alien community “develop(s) a potent and distinctive form of social community that (leads) to a spontaneous experience of intense intimacy and equality.”<sup>61</sup> Before the first stage (separation), they are contained in safe boundaries and walls. Once they are forced to move beyond those walls, they experience a frightening thing: boundaries are pushed out and walls break down. It is a frightening thing but eventually, on this journey at the threshold, they are brought to a deeper unity below the surface of distinctions.

There is a criticism about the idea of liminality as described by van Gennep and Turner in that they somehow limit their ideas to the settings of small-scale tribal societies. However, this unique community that is formed through liminality - Turner calls this *communitas* - happens when people stand together “outside” society. Therefore, the concept of liminality can be applied to larger and concrete historical events, such as to the Johannine community and to the early Christians.

The Johannine community had undergone social dislocation.<sup>62</sup> In the farewell discourse (John 14-17), Jesus warns the disciples about conflict with the synagogue, saying “They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God” (16:2). Later these Christians have been expelled from their original home in the synagogue alongside

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<sup>60</sup> Frost, *Exiles*, 109.

<sup>61</sup> Frost, *Exiles*, 109.

<sup>62</sup> D. Moody Smith, “Judaism and the Gospel of John,” in *Jews and Christians: Exploring the Past, Present, and Future*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 83-84.

their Jewish colleagues, resulting in a kind of social trauma.<sup>63</sup> They are tossed out into the world, stripped of their social alignment with the Jews. Suddenly they have no home and no identity, thus they nurture their own community and group identity at the threshold. They develop an in-group that looks upon others with suspicion as an out-group. They do this both as an effort to reconstruct a social identity and to defend themselves against the onslaught of their opponents.<sup>64</sup>

What the early Christians experienced was similar. Hebrews 13:12-14 says, “Therefore Jesus also suffered *outside* the city gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood. Let us then go to him *outside* the camp and bear the abuse he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.” On the early Christians’ pilgrimage to Jesus outside the camp, Jesus’ redemptive ministry begins. They were aliens on the pilgrimage to know that “here we have no lasting city.” They were following Jesus Christ at the threshold. Again, *Epistle to Diognetus* tells something about their liminal life.

They live in their own countries, but only as aliens. They have a share in everything as citizens, and endure everything as foreigners. Every foreign land is their fatherland, and yet for them every fatherland is a foreign land... They busy themselves on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey the established laws, but in their own lives they go far beyond what the laws require. They love all men, and by all men are persecuted... They are treated by the Jews as foreigners and enemies, and are hunted down by the Greeks; and all the time those who hate them find it impossible to justify their enmity.<sup>65</sup>

To sum up, for the aliens Christian, the *Rites of Passage* can be interpreted in

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<sup>63</sup> Comprehensive expulsion from synagogues of Jewish followers of Jesus happened after 70 AD.

<sup>64</sup> David Rensberger, “Anti-Judaism and the Gospel of John,” in *Anti-Judaism and the Gospels*, ed. William R. Farmer (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), 127-129.

<sup>65</sup> Richardson, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.x.i.ii.html>.

terms of their spiritual formation process, as follows,

*The first stage (separation):* Death with Christ Jesus on the cross.

Separation from old self and old community.

*The second stage (liminality):* In-betweenness on pilgrimage.

In the wilderness, questions, struggles, nakedness.

*The third stage (reintegration):* Resurrection with Christ Jesus.

New identity and new community. Celebration.

This whole process can also be understood in terms of the languages from Ephesians: “You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24). Putting away the old self is the first stage of separation, and clothing with the new self is the third stage of reintegration. However, there is the in-between stage: between taking off old clothes and putting on new ones. This stage of nakedness is a liminal space for the alien Christians in their strange new world. This liminal space is destructive as well as constructive, so that it is “formative.”<sup>66</sup> That’s why this is where spiritual formation operates. This is when spiritual formation happens.

A liminal period involves many dark sides: uncertainty, ordeal, anger, fear, void, ambiguity and disorientation. This liminal period is always formative, however, even though it is not necessarily always a positive formation. Since every alien in this period doesn’t want to stay too long, either one would want to return to the stage before

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<sup>66</sup> The Triple Way by St. Bonaventure also fits here: purgation, illumination and union. This is soul’s journey into God that clearly contains formative spiritual movement.

separation (going back to one's home country)<sup>67</sup>, or be dissolved into the surrounding social structures/forms/customs (melting pot),<sup>68</sup> or develop his own other small-scale internal structure (isolated ghetto of ethnic group).<sup>69</sup> To make this formative liminal period a positive, redemptive, and empowering one, what fills the void is crucial: The Story of God. This was exactly what happened to the Jesus' twelve disciples:

This is obviously the sense of companionship that Jesus' first disciples felt. With Jesus at the center, they experienced a liminality and *communitas* so exquisite that it eventually spoke so profoundly into normal, mainstream society that it altered the history of the world forever... They had separated themselves from mainstream society at great personal cost. They are a perfect example of a liminal society.<sup>70</sup>

While they were thrown into a great challenge and ordeal, they were able to create a deeper sense of communion - a new alien community. They came from all the differences - backgrounds, interests, agendas, religious convictions, educations, to name a few. There was absolutely no reason for them to journey with each other. Some were fishermen; some were the disciples of John the Baptist (ascetics); and Matthew was a tax collector (he used to be a collaborator with the occupying Roman Empire, i.e., a traitor). Furthermore, Simon the Cananaean (Matthew 10:4; Mark 3:18) was a zealot, meaning an archpatriot, who was fiercely opposing to Roman rule. Simon was like a guerrilla, who used a stiletto blade to assassinate a Roman soldier or a tax collector, which included some of the disciples.

Nevertheless, Jesus invited all of them into his company. They journeyed

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<sup>67</sup> "Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!" (Exodus 14:12)

<sup>68</sup> Refer to Frost, *Exile*, 8-9, for the exile Jews who were assimilated in the land of Babylon.

<sup>69</sup> "Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."" (Matthew 17:4; Mark 9:5; Luke 9:33)

<sup>70</sup> Frost, *Exiles*, 113.

together. On their Journey with Jesus, they were continuously being taught about love and forgiveness. After Jesus ascended, the band of disciples grew to about 120 people that included even women and Pharisees. Apostle Paul went even further to break down the boundaries between Jews and Greeks, slave and free, and male and female. They turned the world upside down, and transformed the mainstream society:

Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come. I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:33-35).

As soon as they decided to follow Jesus, they became aliens in the world. They were like little children, with all the ambiguity, uncertainty for their future, and disorientation with their former identity. Jesus was about to be no longer with them. They were about to be separated from their Rabbi. Where Jesus was going, they were not able to follow. Due to the persecutions, they were to be shattered. They were all soon to be dissolved. They were soon to enter the liminal stage. Therefore, what they needed the most was a new commandment: a new kind of love, the new identity. At the threshold of their contemporary world, what they needed most was to remember this story of love: not that they loved Jesus, but that Jesus loved them first. On their journey in liminality, they were called to carry this story: the story of first love. They had carried this story not only wherever they went, but also whenever they went: not only were they to go to Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), but also to carry the promise: "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). The story had journeyed with them. Likewise, the story must journey with the aliens of today as

well. In so doing, the aliens who stand outside society will strengthen their contemporary society with their community's freshness and vitality that come from the deeper communion with the story of Jesus.

## SETTINGS

### ***St. Timothy Presbyterian Church's College/Career Group***

The current study explores the relationship between the Word and spiritual movements within the contexts of the church where the author serves as a pastor and a campus ministry of his own. The first context is called *St. Timothy Presbyterian Church*, located in Toronto, Canada. The church was established in 1996 through the amalgamation of *North York Presbyterian Church* (Korean speaking) and *Living Stone Church* (English speaking). Since its birth, the senior pastor, In Kee Kim, remains the same until today and belongs to the only Canadian Presbyterian denomination, *The Presbyterian Church in Canada*. In late 2000, the church found a home in the west end of Toronto where it currently resides today. The amalgamated church started with the name, *North York Living Stone Church*. However, with its relocation in 2000, it changed its name to *St. Timothy*, who accompanied the apostle Paul. Timothy was the child of a Jewish mother and Greek father, thus symbolizing union two cultures. This new name still reflects the vision of the church: to be a church rooted in its immigrant Korean community but that would also reach beyond to the society around it.

The church places a strong emphasis on teachings of the Word as its leadership believes that a proper understanding of the Bible must be central to spiritual growth as



individual disciples of Jesus as well as a collective community. In addition, the church strives to be an inclusive community since it was originally founded as an immigrant church in the Korean-Canadian community. A testament to this mission is that all its ordained ministers serve both the Korean-speaking and English-speaking ministries. Its session is also comprised of equal numbers of elders from the Korean- and English-speaking congregations. Education departments are also consisted of two separate entities according to the language preferences of the participants. However, they are still under the same pastoral leadership. For instance, similar to the youth groups, there are two college/career groups in the church operating in the two languages, but they are under the same pastoral leadership. Its membership consists of approximately 500 members, 300 in the Korean-speaking congregation and 200 in the English-speaking one. In the English-speaking congregation, there are other ethnic groups present, such as Italian, Taiwanese, Vietnamese, Chinese, and so on.

The college/career group that the current study explores is the Korean speaking one. It was formed in 1997 by the author when he first came to the church as a pastor. It started with 3 and now consists of 25 members. It has weekly bible studies on Sundays, two overnight retreats (sometimes joint one with the English college/career group) and one summer camping. In addition, it gets involved in various church ministries such as Food Bank, nursing home, Vacation Bible School, Choir/Praise team, and so on. The age range is from early twenties to early thirties. Every member is single, and once they get married, they join in the newly married group. The survey (chapters 4 and 5) for the current study was executed during one of the overnight retreats.

***University of Toronto's Campus Group, Ebenezer***

The current study explores the relationship between the Word and spiritual inner movements within another context of the author's own ministry. This second context is called, *Ebenezer*, a Korean-speaking campus Christian group as constituted by *The University of Toronto Student Administrative Council (SAC)*. This parachurch group was established in 1998 by students' own initiative. Some of them went to the mission conference in Toronto in 1998, *KOSTA* (Korean Students Abroad) and were in the same small group. Then, after the conference, they launched this group. Since the birth, it was a student's grass root movement with a strong emphasis on a harmonious relationship between the group and the local churches. The purpose of the group is for young university students to learn the Word of God, to be faithful in prayer and to reach out to the people in the campus.

The author joined the group in 2000 as a graduate student member and then took a pastoral charge since 2003. The author is in charge of every week's bible study, pastoral guidance and leadership training. The group meets every Thursday night throughout the year at *Knox Presbyterian Church* in downtown Toronto. The weekly gathering consists of 30-minute praise/prayer, 60-minute bible study, and 30-minute small group discussion, followed by casual fellowship afterward. During the regular semesters (September – April), the group is gathered in a worship service setting, while during the summer semesters (May – August) in a round-table discussion setting due to relatively less number of students staying in Toronto. The current attendance is normally 20-30 students. Its approximate 200-300 alumni network around the globe has a very strong continuous relationship as well. The survey (chapters 4 and 5) for the current study was

executed during the summer semester's round-table settings.

This chapter has discussed the problem and its setting. The problem it has explored was about the unique characteristics of the alien/immigrant Christians' spiritual formation process in their foreign land and its ramification for their everyday life as individuals and communities. It has then explored the close relationship between their spiritual formation with the Word, especially Jesus' parables. It has also explained the study project's ministry settings where the author is deeply involved in. The next chapter will, therefore, explicate some of the biblical/theological foundations of the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS**

#### **OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTER**

The main idea for this chapter is that spiritual inner/outer movements and the Word are two primary forces behind the theological understanding of an alien Christian's spiritual formation. The Word is the main agent in terms of an alien Christian's unique spiritual formation process. This chapter will especially put an emphasis on Jesus' parables as Jesus was not only the best storyteller, but he also always carried the wonderful stories – parables – with him trying to plant the stories in the hearts of his listeners. Everyone listened to his stories, but not everyone experienced spiritual movements. Therefore, this chapter will discuss some distinctions between concepts versus percepts as well as hearing versus listening with regards to alien Christians' more active spiritual formation, especially Korean-Canadian immigrants. It will then explicate some of the dynamics of their spiritual inner/outer movements through Jesus' stories in terms of ways to overcome their often-negative acute desires and to suggest a sanctified everyday living as a space for spiritual resistance in their foreign land. The chapter will then conclude by illustrating some of the exegetical explorations of the three parables of Jesus that were used in the survey project.

## GENERAL CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality is “all aspects of a human life touched and influenced by their deepest beliefs concerning life’s meaning.”<sup>1</sup> Spirituality doesn’t just happen in a void, but entails all aspects of human life. Alister E. McGrath explains Christian spirituality as it “concerns the quest for a fulfilled and authentic Christian existence, involving the bringing together of the fundamental ideas of Christianity and the whole experience of living on the basis of and within the scope of the Christian faith.”<sup>2</sup> In this sense, Christian spirituality is an expression of living faith in a real world. It happens in a place of one’s daily life, lived in a specific time.

John Stott, in his book *Between Two Worlds*, however, shares one story. He was talking with two students who were brothers. They had been raised in a traditional Christian home, and now both had renounced their Christian tradition and upbringing. Stott asked why: “Was it that you no longer believed Christianity to be true?” Their answer was surprising:

We’re not really interested to know whether Christianity is true...what we want to know is not whether Christianity is *true*, but whether it’s *relevant*. And frankly we don’t see how it can be. Christianity was born two millennia ago in a first-century Palestinian culture. What an ancient religion of the Middle East say to us who live in the exciting, kaleidoscopic world of the end of the twentieth century?<sup>3</sup>

The spirituality of the Christians of the first century cannot merely be applied to

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<sup>1</sup> Scott Lewis, *Spirituality and Christian Life in the New Testament* (lecture, The University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, October 7, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1999), 2.

<sup>3</sup> John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 138.

that of today in a “cut and paste” method. The early Christians lived in a different world. Nevertheless, the spirituality of the early Christians did not lie in an abstract concern with isolated issues of individual ethics,<sup>4</sup> but in a dedication to the quest for a fulfilled and authentic Christian existence in all aspects of their environments. It is not possible to study early Christian spirituality apart from the social, political and economic aspects. These were not separated from their religious lives and spirituality.

Early Christian spirituality is still valid today. Christian spirituality has history, and that history has a character: a movement, not a settlement. God is not an isolated deity for a devoted Christian in a confined time period. God is not contained in a specific region, to special people and in a certain time. Israelites believed that God was only able to speak through and dwell in the temple of Jerusalem. Therefore, the temple was the center of the whole universe. However, Jesus drove out all who were buying and selling there (Matthew 21:12). He said he was going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, and that was why he was harshly accused by religious authority (Matthew 26:61, 27:40; Mark 14:58, 15:29).

God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. “While the deities of other people were associated with places or things, the God of Israel was the God of events: the Redeemer from slavery, the Revealer of the Torah, manifesting Godself in events of history rather than in things or places.”<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, God is enfleshed in the body of Jesus Christ, and still lives in the Spirit among people. The Bible “pays more attention to generations, to events, than to countries, to things; it is more concerned with history than

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<sup>4</sup> Richard A. Horsley and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Message and the Kingdom: How Jesus and Paul Ignited a Revolution and Transformed the Ancient World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 232.

<sup>5</sup> Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1951), 7-8.

with geography.”<sup>6</sup> This is an important aspect of the Bible for the purpose of this thesis-project. Korean-Canadian immigrants have a strong sense of alienation in society, but their alienation is far more than their physical context - geography, language, citizenship, custom and culture. The stories of the Bible, still today, can create a new storied world in an inner space of the aliens, so that they are able to find themselves both more alien and more at home.

Therefore, it is very true that Christian spirituality entails all aspects of a human life “still today” that are touched and influenced by one’s deepest beliefs concerning life’s meaning. However, at the same time, Christian spirituality also

... refers to the way in which the Christian life is understood and the explicitly devotional practices which have been developed to foster and sustain that relationship with God. Christian spirituality may be thus understood as the way in which Christian individuals or groups aim to deepen their experience of God, or to “practise the presence of God,” to use a phrase especially associated with Brother Lawrence (c. 1614-91).<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, in one way, Christian spirituality is the earthly spirituality which is rooted in the real world, including society, culture, politics, economics, and so on. In another way, however, Christian spirituality cannot be explained only by sociological, cultural, political and economic interpretations. It also must be understood as the way in which individuals and groups aim to deepen their experience of God and to practice the presence of God.

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<sup>6</sup> Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 7.

<sup>7</sup> McGrath, *Christian Spirituality*, 3.

## ALIEN CHRISTIAN'S MILIEU & SPIRITUALITY

If Christian spirituality is still relevant for today, it should be for people living in different settings. Immigrant life can be filled with boredom and monotony. The Christian immigrant life is not that different. As noted in Chapter One, Christianity has always been a significant part of Korean immigrant life in Canada. In a foreign land, whether they want a social reunion, living support, a community network, or spiritual fulfillment, they come to church. However, it is also very true that immigrant life is filled with all the routines, all the chores and humdrum, and life itself becomes meaningless.

As discussed in the same chapter, immigrants spend more time than natives on purchasing, education, work and household activities, while they spend less time on leisure, socializing/television and eating/drinking.<sup>8</sup> They need to settle down in a foreign land, not only for themselves but for their future generations. They have to cope with many barriers such as language, cultural differences and customs, to name a few. They have tremendous fear for the future, because their future is very uncertain. Furthermore, when it comes to their children, fear becomes even more intense. In this sense, an immigrant life can be a place of fear.

Nouwen noticed that if life is fear-ridden, it easily becomes routines:

Routine induces a sense of sameness and familiarity by which fears can be temporarily alleviated. We often use routine ways of talking, ways of thinking, and ways of acting to avoid fearful interactions. Routines are predictable and repeatable and hold no surprises... Jesus encountered this routine behavior in the

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<sup>8</sup> Daniel S. Hamermesh and Stephen J. Trejo, 2010, *How Do Immigrants Spend Time?: The Process of Assimilation*, NBER working paper 16430, National Bureau of Economic Research, accessed March 13, 2015, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w16430.pdf>.



form of legalism.<sup>9</sup>

Since the immigrant life's milieu causes great anxiety and fear, they are prone to cling to familiar ways of thinking and acting: routines.

Being aliens in a new land makes it especially difficult and spiritually challenging to live with a single identity:

Resident refers to someone living in a particular place, who is native to that place or is a citizen, while alien means not simply foreigner but someone utterly strange, someone who comes from 'a different star' or belongs to a different genus. Translated as a paradox, resident alien means 'the citizen foreigner' or 'the native stranger.' She is at home, but her homeland is elsewhere. She belongs to it and yet remains foreign.<sup>10</sup>

This paradoxical dual identity is a great challenge for Korean-Canadian Christian immigrants. However, because of their unique milieu, they are able to achieve spiritual fulfillment. This dual identity is beneficial for them and their society. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza therefore adds, "Not really belonging anywhere gives the freedom to belong where we want to settle down so that we can learn to live in solidarity with one another in the world as both 'foreign and native.'"<sup>11</sup>

Jesus prayed, "thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Christian spirituality has this dual identity: not only heavenly but also earthly. It is not a separation of the earthly life with the heavenly one in the future. Jesus proclaims the kingdom of God is near, or even "here and now," but not yet completed. Therefore,

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<sup>9</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Lifesigns: Intimacy, Fecundity, and Ecstasy in Christian Perspective* (New York: Doubleday, 1986), 75-78.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Empowering Memory and Movement: Thinking and Working Across Borders* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 63.

<sup>11</sup> Fiorenza, *Empowering Memory and Movement*, 64.

Christians are called to live with this dual identity - “now” and “not yet.”

Aliens are never at home, but this reality should not be seen as negative.

Hauerwas and Willimon quote from Hugh of St. Victor: “The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is a foreign place.”<sup>12</sup> This is a call for the church to exist in the world “missionally,” at any time and in any culture. Likewise, it can be the aliens’ call to live in their very culture “missionally.” They can recognize their status as “resident aliens” in a foreign place, in a liberating and fulfilling way.

This understanding is important because it leads to a crucial aspect in the spiritual formation of a Christian immigrant: The Word/Story of God. “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14a). The Word of God was incarnated in Jesus Christ: the Word has dual identity - foreign and native, and earthly and heavenly. In this sense, spiritual formation for the resident alien does not happen in the absence of the Word. Spiritual formation goes with the Word. Immigrant Christians may have phenomenological experiences, but they should not be far from the teachings of the Word. The experiences must facilitate understanding of the Word and deepen the loving passion for the Word. In their spiritual journey, the Word of God must become flesh and make dwelling among them. The Word is given to them, so that the Word will form, mold and bring fulfillment to their lives. That is why Jesus often says to his listeners, “He who has ears, let him hear” (Matthew 11:15, 13:9; Mark 4:9, 4:23). An alien can then be “an active, meaning making agent continuously engaged in the process of organizing

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<sup>12</sup> Stanley Hauerwas and Will Willimon, “Why Resident Aliens Struck a Chord,” *Missiology: An International Review* XIX, no. 4, (October 1991): 421.

lived experience in the form of a narrative.”<sup>13</sup>

## **BIBLICAL/THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS**

### ***Movement***

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash” (Matthew 7:24-27).

Spiritual “formation” involves movement. Anything that forms moves. Spiritual formation is spiritual growth. One becomes mature as one goes on a journey. However, this formation does not happen overnight. Authentic spiritual formation doesn’t come through mere techniques. If one builds one’s spirituality on sand, when the rain comes down, the streams rise, and the wind blows, then it falls with a great crash. Life’s reality is not “you may experience hardships,” but “you will.” “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Rain comes down over Christians and non-Christians alike (Matthew 5:45). On their spiritual journey, immigrants encounter many struggles. They are heartbroken, but “we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). This faithful understanding gives them spiritual muscle. Like any athlete who wants to participate in the Olympics, their

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<sup>13</sup> Peter J. Jankowski, “Story Formed Identity and Spirituality in Psychological and Theological Dialogue,” *International Journal for Dialogical Science* 5, no. 1 (Fall 2011): 49.

spirituality is being formed over times, through many struggles and trials. In this way, they build their lives on the rock – the Word of God. This is a life-long journey.

In addition, this spiritual formation through the Word is about existential change. From cocoon to butterfly, from shell to sky, it is like metamorphosis. It is a process to abandon one's small world to gain a larger one. One loses oneself to gain the life from above. One dies to live. "What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3:8).

Furthermore, in relation to the Word for spiritual formation, Jesus gives this parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it" (Matthew 13:44-46). Some may ask to the alien Christians, "For the sake of your spiritual growth, what sacrifice have you made?" But to them, it is not a sacrifice, because they give up one thing to gain even more. They find treasure, so they cannot help but sell all their possessions, otherwise they would be foolish.

Spiritual formation is likewise. It is a continuous process to abandon what one once held dear. It is a journey that opens one's eyes to consider everything as a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus Christ. The Word of God is as sweet as honey. It is so precious that it is only natural to give up one's small world, while not considering it as a sacrifice. When one is truly pursuing spiritual growth in the Word, one is able to see the great value of the kingdom of God. On the journey, one is eager to

come out of the small and familiar old world that one had created, and encounter the bigger reality that the Word has created.

Again, this spiritual movement happens with the Word. The Word is a companion along the journey: “Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path” (Psalm 119:105). The Word forms human being as well as one’s spirituality. “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14a). The Word of God was incarnated in Jesus Christ. The Word moved downward. The Word moved to the weak and the vulnerable, the resident aliens. The Word moved from Jerusalem to all of Judea, to Samaria and to the ends of the earth. The movement of the Word continues. It still moves from above to below, on their hearts and souls, and chooses its dwelling among them. The Word of God is still being embodied, among and within them, so it forms and transforms them. Therefore, Christian spiritual formation and the Word are bound up in each other.

### ***Jesus, the Best Storyteller***

Jesus was the greatest storyteller. Each resident alien has some stories, although their stories may have no significant meaning in terms of their spiritual formation. However, “at some point in our journey through life, our story collides with the Story of God – the Story with a large S.”<sup>14</sup> Jesus’ story always calls attention: “You, listen!” Many times, it invites a listener into questions, then into struggles. It stirs up the person’s life tendency – settlement. It then pushes one to make a choice, either to be in one ear and out the other, or to merge one’s life story with his - a large S.

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<sup>14</sup> Leighton Ford, *The Power of Story: Rediscovering the Oldest, Most Natural Way to Reach People for Christ* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1994), 10.

Jesus still is the best storyteller today. His stories are always compelling. One of the reasons that makes Jesus the best storyteller is that he always invites listeners to “participate” in the stories with their whole beings. He brings listeners out of their old small world, and has them see their world from outside with a new perspective – kingdom perspective. He reveals what is the operating power in their small familiar world. His story opens their eyes to see that there is always a bigger reality – kingdom reality.

All his stories – especially the parables – are mostly about the kingdom of God. They explain what the kingdom of God is like, who God is, what a listener’s true reality is and what God’s purpose for God’s beloved creation is. In this sense, there is one intent in his parables: the clash of two kingdoms. It is the clash between a listener’s and his kingdom. If one does not have ears to hear, then his story just hits the soil of one’s heart then dies out. If one has the ears to hear, then his story penetrates one’s own established small world, breaks up its unplowed ground (Hosea 10:12b), and cultivates one’s soul. It is this clash that whenever one hears the story, it discomforts one. It stirs up one’s settled soul, and often disturbs it. It is as if to bring one to a mirror and say, “This is the reality of your world you have so far established and here is another reality of my world that I am offering to you. Now choose.” It peels off one’s disguised habitual religiosity, and shows one’s true spiritual reality – often spiritual bankruptcy. One’s only legitimate response would then be, repentance: “He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner’” (Luke 18:13b). Jesus’ parables are not interested in proving one’s framework, but in transforming them. One’s world changes as one truly listens to and understands the stories.

In Chapter One, the definition of a parable was discussed. In Hebrew *mashal*, in Greek *parabole*, a parable means “an allusive narrative which is told for an ulterior purpose.”<sup>15</sup> Jesus’ parables are tools for understanding the kingdom of God. His parables convey the kingdom reality, and this reality is not just a concept or fantasy, but a down-to-earth reality for every human being. However, why are they hidden? Why not straightforward? It is because his stories can be heard by those who have ears to hear. In this regard, Søren Kierkegaard understood parables in terms of indirect communication: “...direct communication is important for conveying information, but learning is more than information, especially when people think they already understand.”<sup>16</sup> It is very true that if one thinks one already understands, one’s defense mechanism works, thus one uses the story just to conform to one’s own world. However, indirect communication finds a way in a back window and confronts what one wrongly assumes reality.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Jesus’ Story Perceived and Experienced***

Jesus’ story then has two layers. The first one is a layer of the story itself. A listener hears what the story is about. One grasps the information contained in the story, and understands the plots, characters and dramas. The other layer is of the truth realized: a listener not only hears and understands the story, but also gets into the world of the story. One is actually in the story, not outside of it. Jesus is not telling the story to just anyone, but to oneself personally. The story not only conveys information, but one’s

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<sup>15</sup> David Stern, *Parable and Story in Judaism and Christianity* (ed. Clemens Thoma and Michael Wyschogrod; New York: Paulist, 1989), 58, quoted in Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 8.

<sup>16</sup> Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 8.

<sup>17</sup> Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 8.

reality – true identity, true piety, and one’s own kingdom that one has tried to establish.

“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). A universal truth does not set the listener free. One knows something is true, but it not necessarily penetrates one’s soul, so that it will not change one’s small familiar world. One’s world remains, no matter how much one acknowledges something is true. It is just a universal truth. However, the truth one really gets to know – experience, realize and touch – will indeed set one free. It will not be just any other truth out there, but it is the truth in one’s real life. Therefore, one not only receives but also perceives the truth. One no longer tries to hold on to the universal truth, but the realized truth in turn grabs, holds and guides. One no longer tries to protect the truth – like the Pharisees and St. Paul before conversion – but now knows that the realized truth will protect oneself. One does not create one’s own small story with one’s own taste anymore, but one’s own small story is now plunged into the vast ocean of Jesus’ Story. One’s life then gets into the process of being reinterpreted, reoriented, reformed and recreated.

Marshall McLuhan - a Canadian philosopher of communication theory - believed that the “death of Christianity” occurs the moment when it becomes *concept*. As long as it remains *percept* - directly involving the perceiver - it is alive. For McLuhan, the revelation is of *thing*, not theory. The revelation reveals actual thing-ness. The people in biblical times were not working on theory, but on direct percept. Even though all understanding and all concept were against them (Paul in Damascus, for instance), they were directly perceiving a reality that was revealed to them.<sup>18</sup>

According to McLuhan, religious experience is the perception of revelation. The

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<sup>18</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium and the Light: Reflections on Religion*, ed., Eric McLuhan and Jacek Szklarek (Toronto: Stoddart, 1999), 209.



world of the New Testament was a spirit-filled world – the world with the spirit called “holy,” as well as “unholy.” The language in the New Testament is filled with an impressive amount of experiential language. Christian spiritual formation through the Word will not be adequate if it is primarily built with ideas and concepts, rather than experience. One may not analyze one’s own religious experience adequately, but this does not mean that one can ignore its reality and importance in the formation of spirituality. One comes into Jesus-focused spirituality through some kind of remarkable religious experience by perceiving the Word.

Therefore, it is not an exaggeration to say that the growth of Christianity is mainly due to its powerful content of religious experience. Luke Timothy Johnson, in his book, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity*, emphasizes that Christianity was born because early Christians were convinced that they had experienced God’s transforming power through the resurrection of Jesus, the divine work.<sup>19</sup> As McLuhan defined religious experience as the perception of revelation, in similar language, Johnson characterizes religious experience as an encounter with the “ultimate power.”<sup>20</sup> This encounter is so powerful that anyone who experiences it reshapes one’s consciousness and organizes the rest of one’s life around it.

If one were to attempt to classify McLuhan into Dulles’ models of revelation, he would fall into the third category, “revelation as mystical or inner experience.”<sup>21</sup> As many of the biblical prophets experienced some form of personal encounter with God

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<sup>19</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity: A Missing Dimension in New Testament Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 185.

<sup>20</sup> Johnson, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity*, 61.

<sup>21</sup> In *Models of Revelation*, Avery Dulles identifies models into which theological concepts of revelation may be grouped: 1) revelation as doctrine, 2) revelation as history, 3) revelation as inner experience, 4) revelation as dialectical presence, and 5) revelation as new awareness. For each of these models, Dulles includes a discussion of its merits and weaknesses.

which led to their prophetic activity, in Dulles' third model, revelation is an immediate interior experience – a direct, unmediated encounter with the divine. This interior experience is unique to each individual, and the perception of the divine is a matter for the individual self.<sup>22</sup>

The moment of revelation for this model is self-evident. It takes place in the immediate, highly subjective, interior perception – not conception – or awareness of the divine presence. This model identifies the substance – the content of revelation – simply as God's loving presence communicated to the individual who stands open before God.<sup>23</sup>

There are many merits in this way of understanding of the formation of one's Christian spirituality through the Word. However, at the same time, it has weaknesses. The quest for private spiritual experience has sometimes resulted in harmful religious excess and isolation from life of the Church. Therefore, Dulles argues that a characteristic defect of the revelation-as-experience model "is not its emphasis on experience but rather its excessively narrow concept of experience."<sup>24</sup> When a too-narrow, immediate, individual and instantaneous understanding of experience is evident, "revelation comes to be seen bare, unanalyzed datum that imposes itself on the human spirit as a *tabula rasa*."<sup>25</sup> God becomes a strange phenomenon perceived without any reliance upon community, tradition, or other forms of worldly mediation."<sup>26</sup>

In this sense, Dulles considers experience as continuous and cumulative and subject to interpretation through many complex criteria. It is constituted not by lonely

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<sup>22</sup> Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1983), 27-28.

<sup>23</sup> Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 76-77.

<sup>24</sup> Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 81.

<sup>25</sup> Latin words that refer to the mind before it perceives the impressions gained from experience.

<sup>26</sup> Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 81.

individuals, but by communities who share and interact.<sup>27</sup> He seems to think of “community” as a form of worldly mediation of the experience of God. It is largely agreed that Christian community can indeed contribute to discernment of divine truth. Nonetheless, it also needs to be agreed that this occurs through the community’s shared subjective spiritual life. Overall, the challenges to revelation-as-experience summarized by Dulles reflect desire for testability, certainty and authority in the discernment and interpretation of revelation.

In this sense, Wolfhart Pannenberg strongly argues for the inability of personal experience to assure certainty, while acknowledging that personal experience can indeed be real and true.<sup>28</sup> Individual spiritual experience can never mediate absolute unconditional certainty. It can only offer subjective certainty that needs clarification and confirmation in an ongoing process of experience. Therefore, Pannenberg harshly criticizes that a claim of any kind of certainty only based on experience is irrational fanaticism.<sup>29</sup>

McLuhan’s attitude toward spiritual/religious experience can be criticized by many, as analyzing and valuing these experiences is surely not an easy task. However, it needs to be noted that spiritual/religious experience was real in the lives of the early Christians, as well as in today’s Christians. For today’s theologians, as Johnson says, the denial or suppression of religious experience leads to the conceit of scholars.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 81.

<sup>28</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 47.

<sup>29</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 48.

<sup>30</sup> Johnson, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity*, 51.

### *Hearing and Listening*

In relation to McLuhan's idea of religious experience/perception, he distinguishes hearing from listening. To hear is to put oneself on the same wavelength as the speaker, while to listen is to blinker oneself, to restrict the eyes.<sup>31</sup> In other words, to listen is to conceive, while to hear is to perceive. Jesus blamed the scribes and the Pharisees because they only listened, and did not hear. They understood nothing at all from Jesus' stories because they had no ears to hear but only to listen.

In this sense, McLuhan loved the Fourth Gospel. For him, to hear is to perceive, and to perceive only occurs from experience, which eventually leads one to faith. One of the leading Johannine scholars, Robert Kysar, says that the experiential theology of the Fourth Gospel stands out.<sup>32</sup> Nowhere in the New Testament can one find a theology of the relationship of faith and experience worked out as thoroughly as in this book. Nowhere is the hearing basis of faith emphasized as it is here. Equally distinct is the insistence of the Fourth Gospel that faith without seeing but by hearing/perceiving is the goal of the believer.<sup>33</sup> For John, as well as McLuhan, failure to believe is rooted in the failure to fully hear and perceive the voice of God in the Son. Therefore, faith-hearing is the act of perceiving the presence of God in the voice of Jesus, the Son. Faith-hearing involves perception and the apprehension of its meaning in a believing way. It is the finding a dimension of ultimate meaning in an experience of hearing. In this day and age, where knowledge and rationality are everything, both John and McLuhan emphasize

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<sup>31</sup> McLuhan, *The Medium and the Light*, 99.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Kysar, *John: The Maverick Gospel*, rev. ed. (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 130.

<sup>33</sup> Kysar, *John*, 130. Also refer to Jesus saying to Thomas in John 20:29, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

experience and perception. In this day and age, where sensory excitement is everything, both John and McLuhan tell that seeing alone is not enough, thus one must go beyond to hearing, perceiving and experiencing.

“Where is the life we have lost in living? Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information,” T. S. Eliot once lamented.<sup>34</sup> This lamentation echoes with so many prophets in the Bible. “He said, ‘Go and tell this people. “Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving”’” (Isaiah 6:9). John the Baptist shouted out: “Repent! For the kingdom of heaven is near” (Matthew 3:2). St. Paul continued: “They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: ‘The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said through Isaiah the prophet: Go to this people and say, “You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving”’” (Acts 28:25-26).

Jesus even went further: “Then Jesus said, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear.’” When he was alone, the Twelve and the others asked him about the parables. He told them, “The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, ‘they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!’” (Mark 4:9-12)

“Shema Israel, Hear O Israel!” One must not just skim the surface of language in the parables. One must not just play with the outer skin of language in the stories. Even though one rejoices in listening to the stories of Jesus, if the words do not penetrate into

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<sup>34</sup> T. S. Eliot, *The Rock* (London: Faber & Faber, 1934). Accessed May 21, 2015. <http://www.rjgeib.com/thoughts/information/information.html>.

the deepest part of one's soul, the stories would not bear any fruit. The seed hidden in the stories is small but it contains life in the kingdom, thus, "Shema Israel!"

As mentioned in Chapter One, there are about 38 parables of Jesus, and they are all engaging. Twenty-two of the parables start with a question such as "Who from you...?" or "What do you think?" or "How...?" Others have questions at the end of the story.<sup>35</sup> They create interest, and often are a shock and surprise to the listeners. The parables have the intention to force thought, usually new and unexpected one.<sup>36</sup> This is an out of the box experience through participation in the parables, so that the listener can move beyond one's small familiar world of understanding and continues on a journey of spiritual formation. It is a call to move: a move from superficial thinking. It is also a call to discern the current state of one's soul, and to have courage in the faith to take up the journey. Furthermore, unlike Aesop's fables, Jesus' parables are not general stories with universal truths.<sup>37</sup> They speak context – a listener's context. When one hears the parable of the Good Samaritan, for instance, the story does not leave one as a bystander. It draws one's attention, and one is immersed in the story. This is not only a story told two thousand years ago, in a different part of the world with different customs, cultures and socio-economic and political circumstances. They still speak to one's own context, here and now.

Therefore, when reading Jesus' parables, one needs to remember that the stories would be non-existent, if they remained a concept. As long as they remain a percept – directly involving the perceiver – they are alive. When one truly hears the stories, one

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<sup>35</sup> Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 18.

<sup>36</sup> Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 19.

<sup>37</sup> Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 20.

experiences revelation. This revelation, then, is not a theory because it reveals one's true, hidden self. As mentioned earlier, the people in biblical times were not working on theory, but direct percept: they were engaging with the stories within their context.<sup>38</sup>

### ***The Parables for Korean-Canadian Immigrants as Aliens***

Jesus' story never comes out of depersonalization. When hearing Jesus' parables, the listeners face, interact and personalize with their own life context. Jesus' language is always authentic and personal. Therefore, it always penetrates a masqueraded-self to touch the deeper part of the self. Eugene Peterson, in this regard, explains the type of language found in Jesus' stories:

[Jesus'] language is just as local and present and personal with the Father who is in heaven as it is with his companions over meals at the table and while walking on the road. I want to insist that the language of Jesus in his prayers is neither less nor more himself, soul and body, than in his stories.<sup>39</sup>

Jesus' stories are not only fun or inspiring, but invite people to be transformed into the image of God. When Jesus tells the stories, he invites people to "participate and engage" with their whole existence. Jesus brings them out of their true hidden motives and intentions from their inner world, and plants the Kingdom of God within their soul.

Therefore, it is important to understand the dynamics of Jesus' stories when discussing about Korean Christian immigrants. They have their own unique stories. Jung Young Lee, a retired theologian at Drew University who immigrated to the United States from South Korea, explains his theological approach according to his own context this

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<sup>38</sup> McLuhan, *The Medium and the Light: Reflections on Religion*, 81.

<sup>39</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, *Tell it Slant: A Conversation on the Language of Jesus in His Stories and Prayers* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 160.

way:

Theology is autobiographical, but it is not an autobiography. My theology is not just a story of my life. It is the story of my faith journey in the world. It is my story of how God formed me, nurtures me, guides me, loves me, allows me to age, and will end my life....Telling my story is not itself theology, but a basis for theology, indeed the primary context for doing my theology. This is why one cannot do theology for another. If theology is contextual, it must certainly be at root autobiographical.<sup>40</sup>

Korean immigrants have autobiographical stories, but the stories are not isolated from Jesus' stories. Their stories are to be interpreted into the mysterious work of the Holy Scriptures and the Spirit. They cultivate a new perspective to recognize that their unique life is an ongoing journey toward the likeness of Jesus Christ. Every immigrant's life is making its own story and needs to be combined with the Story of God – the Story in Jesus' narratives. Through these stories, their lives are in formation: a life of continuous movement, not of settlement. Abraham (heir vs. faith), Jacob (struggle and competition) and Joseph (dreams) had their own life stories. Each had their own narrative, yet at the same time had God's narrative working mysteriously and harmoniously with each other. The Bible is full of these narratives and unique spiritual formations. In this sense, an immigrant's unique life story and its process of spiritual formation can be reinterpreted through the story of Jesus.

Korean-Canadian immigrant Christians are often marginalized, as Jesus was:

... a new marginal person *par excellence*...He was a stranger to his own people...Being outside the camp (or the house of Israel) Jesus became a friend of marginalized people: outcasts, tax collectors, Gentiles, women, the poor, and the oppressed...He was not accepted by the dominant groups of his day. The Pharisees, scribes, Sadducees, and Romans rejected him...He was an outsider,

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<sup>40</sup> Jung Young Lee, *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 7.



one who lived **in-between**...He was human and divine; therefore, he lived **in-both** worlds...he was truly the new marginal person who was not only in-between but also in-both worlds. He was the man who lived **in-beyond** racial, cultural, gender, and class divisions, but was also the man of the whole world. He was, therefore, the new marginal person *par excellence*.<sup>41</sup>

This “in-beyond” interpretation, encompassing “in-between” and “in-both,” empowers the Korean Christian immigrant life. Despite their Canadian citizenship, they still live in a foreign land as aliens. However, Jesus was an alien who lived in-beyond, and his stories tell about kingdom living, which conveys the life of both “in-between” and “in-both” but further of “in-beyond.” When they truly hear Jesus’ message in the stories, they connect with the above and below, so that they may experience life to the fullest in their foreign land.

### ***Mimetic Desire of Aliens***

Immigrants desire. Surely, every human being desires, but due to their marginal and peripheral place in a foreign land, their desire is greatly intensified. Being on the margins, they especially desire the people at the center. They desire their immigrant lives to be like the ones at the center: in other words, people at the center become their role model. René Girard explains this mimetic desire<sup>42</sup> this way:

Biologically determined appetites and needs, which are common to both men and animals, and unchanging since they bear upon fixed objects, stand in contrast to *desire* and *passion*, which are exclusively human. Passion, intense desire, is born the moment our vague longings are trained on a *model* that suggests to us what we should desire, typically in desiring the model itself. This model may be society as a whole, but often it is an individual whom we admire. Everything that humanity

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<sup>41</sup> Jung Young Lee, *Marginality*, 71-72. (emphasis added in bold)

<sup>42</sup> René Girard uses the term “mimetic” to explain that all of human desires are borrowed from other people.

endows with prestige it transforms into a model. This is true not only of children and adolescents, but also of adults.<sup>43</sup>

This desire does not come from within oneself, but from others. “One always desires whatever belongs to that one, the neighbor... We assume that desire is objective or subjective, but in reality it rests on a third party who gives values to the objects. The third party is usually the one who is closest, the neighbor.”<sup>44</sup> In other words, immigrants desire what their model close to them in time and space desires, and they covet to bring the object within their grasp. Therefore, rivalry between the two becomes inevitable. Girard defines this as “mimetic rivalry.”<sup>45</sup>

Mimetic rivalry often results in conflict. “Our world is filled with competition, frenzied ambition in every domain.”<sup>46</sup> In this sense, it is understood why immigrants spend much more time than non-immigrants on purchasing, education, work and household activities (see Chapter One). This mimetic rivalry can be seen in different forms, such as pride, anger, envy, lust or jealousy. These are such a big hindrance for spiritual growth, authentic spiritual formation and living life to its fullest, in a foreign land as aliens.

However, mimetic rivalry must not always be seen as negative:

...we should not conclude that mimetic desire is bad in itself. If our desires were not mimetic, they would be forever fixed on predetermined objects; they would be a particular form of instinct. Human beings could no more change their desire than cows their appetite for grass. Without mimetic desire there would be neither freedom nor humanity. Mimetic desire is intrinsically good... If the desire of

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<sup>43</sup> René Girard, *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2014), 4-5.

<sup>44</sup> René Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, trans. James G. Williams (New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 9.

<sup>45</sup> Girard, *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*, 5.

<sup>46</sup> Girard, *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*, 7.

children were not mimetic, if they did not of necessity choose for models the human beings who surround them, humanity would have neither language nor culture. If desire were not mimetic, we would not be open to what is human or what is divine.<sup>47</sup>

The point is that an immigrant's desire is not objective or subjective, but mimetic. In their foreign land, while trying to settle down to live a better life for future generations to come, when immigrants are angry, envious, or jealous due to being marginalized, it is largely because of this mimetic desire. Not only immigrants but people in general are usually not able to see their desire as mimetic, while in fact their desire is always social. As a result, when they are caught up in a whirling vortex of mimetic rivalry, antagonism continues to develop. A paradox then occurs: "the antagonists resemble one another more and more...Envy, jealousy, and hate render alike those they possess..."<sup>48</sup>

Since the aliens display strong mimetic desires in their foreign land, it is noteworthy to discuss "otherness." Miroslav Volf, a Croatian theologian, left his home country during the war in the former Yugoslavia, and settled in the United States. Through his personal experience of dual citizenship, he wrote about story formed identity, as "(1) a self-construction process characterized by differentiation, and (2) a framing of the self as self-in-relation to others, including Deity. Self-in-relation refers to the individual as separate, and yet reciprocally embedded within social contexts."<sup>49</sup> He continued,

The human self is formed ... through a complex process of 'taking in' and 'keeping out.' ... a result of a distinction from the other and the internalization of the relationship to the other; it arises out of the complex history of

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<sup>47</sup> Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, 15-16.

<sup>48</sup> Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, 13.

<sup>49</sup> Jankowski, "Story Formed Identity and Spirituality in Psychological and Theological Dialogue," 49.

‘differentiation’ in which both the self and the other take part by negotiating their identities in interaction with one another.<sup>50</sup>

Whether noticing or not, aliens are in the complex process of formulating their dual identities. In this process, the other has tremendous influence. “[T]he necessary existence of the other for my own self is but a reminder that ... we become who we are through the embodiment of the story in the communities in which we are [immersed].”<sup>51</sup> Not any story will do this job, according to Hauerwas. Only a certain story “forces me to live in a manner that gives me the skill to take responsibility for my character.”<sup>52</sup>

Aliens have no idea about the direction of this process - toward mimetic rivalry or toward imitation of Jesus Christ. In the Gospels, Jesus speaks in terms of models and imitation: “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your soul” (Matthew 11:29). Jesus’ urge to imitate him is very different than that of Satan:

It is not due to inflated self-love...it is to turn us away from mimetic rivalries...What Jesus invites us to imitate is his own *desire*, the spirit that directs him toward the goal on which his intention is fixed: to resemble God the Father as much as possible...His goal is to become the perfect image of God. Therefore he commits all his powers to imitating his Father. In inviting us to imitate him, he invites us to imitate his own imitation.”<sup>53</sup>

What, then, are the differences between the desire of Jesus and of Satan? When

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<sup>50</sup> Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 66, quoted in Peter J. Jankowski, “Story Formed Identity and Spirituality in Psychological and Theological Dialogue,” 48.

<sup>51</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 148-149, quoted in Jankowski, “Story Formed Identity and Spirituality in Psychological and Theological Dialogue,” 55.

<sup>52</sup> Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 149, quoted in Jankowski, “Story Formed Identity and Spirituality in Psychological and Theological Dialogue,” 55.

<sup>53</sup> Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, 13.

people were challenging Jesus' authority, Jesus answered: "You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). In this sense, Girard differentiates these two:

God and Satan are the two supreme models, "arch models"...one between models who never become obstacles and rivals for their disciples because they desire nothing in a greedy and competitive way and models whose greed for whatever they desire has immediate repercussions on their imitators, transforming them right away into diabolic obstacles...Satan imitates the same model as Jesus, God himself, but in a spirit of arrogance and rivalry for power...Satan does not "create" by his own means. Rather he sustains himself as a parasite on what God creates by imitating God in a manner that is jealous, grotesque, perverse, and as contrary as possible to the upright and obedient imitation of Jesus. To repeat, Satan is an imitator in the rivalistic sense of the word.<sup>54</sup>

In this sense, the Story of God empowers the formation process into a much more life-fulfilling way. Aliens are surrounded by others, but through the power of the Story of God they can interpret their milieu in a "communal" understanding, as they embrace the story of the Trinity. "In the Trinity ... distinct persons are internally constituted by the indwelling of other persons in them. The personal identity of each is unthinkable without the presence of others in each; such presence of others is part and parcel of the identity of each."<sup>55</sup>

Jesus often says, "He who has ears, let him hear" (Matthew 11:15, 13:9; Mark 4:9, 4:23). In other words, he urges his listeners to imitate his desire. Therefore, Jesus always expects the listeners' full "participation" in his stories. He then reveals what is the

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<sup>54</sup> Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, 40, 44-45.

<sup>55</sup> Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 187, quoted in Jankowski, "Story Formed Identity and Spirituality in Psychological and Theological Dialogue," 51.

actual operating power and passion - mimetic desire and rivalry - in their lives. In this regard, two-third of his parables start with questions, and it is a call to participate in the parables. It is also a call to move: a move from mimetic desire/rivalry to the imitation of Jesus' desire, revealed in his stories.

### *Aliens' Everyday Space of Resistance*

In this sense, the alien Christian's authentic spirituality has to be resistant to the mimetic rivalry desire of one's everyday life in a foreign land. It is to express a living faith, in a real world. It happens in one's daily life, lived in a specific time:

The present! It is unfolding before our very eyes. When stepping out the door, one sees there the spectacle in our here. Still more, it is contemporary custom one sees everywhere people go, in the multitude of households themselves, in the diverse places people congregate, in the parks and gardens... And yet this now is, in actuality, moving. - Kon Wajiro (1929)<sup>56</sup>

Christian spirituality happens in a place in the present life. In the same way, the Fourth Gospel understands that the incarnation of God is, in actuality, happening "here and now." In this sense, there is no room for Gnosticism in Christian spirituality. Its practice is in "the now of everydayness."<sup>57</sup> By the same token, Korean-Canadian immigrants as aliens have their place of living in a society. As previously discussed, their mimetic desire is intensified because of their marginal and peripheral context. Their place needs to be interpreted as it is greatly related to their spiritual formation.

One of the theological tasks is to relate the central contents of faith with the

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<sup>56</sup> Harry D. Harootunian, *History's Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practices, and the Question of Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 1.

<sup>57</sup> Harootunian, *History's Disquiet*, 3.

tradition of the church, and the context of the present. The key in practicing theology is to ask and answer questions pertinent to one's experience of God in relevant ways, to one's culture and entire historical and communal journey of faith. One type of theological interpretation does not necessarily fit all, because different communities ask different questions. For instance, Korean-Canadian immigrants often find themselves needing to relate their marginalized existence with their Christian faith, and with other central lives in society. In addition, they need to relate their faith that is being formed with the majority of the traditional thought system of Confucianism and Buddhism, which were dominant in Korean society for a thousand years.

In this sense, situating at the margins of the society, immigrants realize more and more that their spiritual and theological formations are not a finished product that can be transported to all peoples, times and places. God contextualized Godself as a human being – the Incarnation. God accepted the constraints and risks of contextual communication and revealed Godself to humanity in Christ. God spoke the language of the people, and used the cultural practices of pagan societies to communicate God's message to those living in them.

Faith and culture cannot be separated from one another. The gospel movement does not take place in a cultural void. It is always “incarnated” in a specific cultural context. Apostle Paul confesses in 1 Corinthians:

To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.

(9:20-22)

Contextualization might lead to compromise or syncretism. However, the real goal of contextualization is to communicate both clearly to an individual's spiritual formation process in a specific culture/place, with relevance to the Bible.

It then leads to a discussion about the distinction between "place" and "space." Chapter One referred to this by quoting Henri Nouwen: "...in the spiritual life, the word discipline means the effort to create some *space* in which God can act...In the spiritual life, discipline means to create that *space* in which something can happen that we hadn't planned or counted on."<sup>58</sup> Korean-Canadian immigrants have their living "place," but at the same time, they also create their spiritual "space" in that place. If this "place" is where their mimetic desire continues to be intensified, the "space" is where their alternative Christian living can be possible.

The French Jesuit theologian and philosopher Michel de Certeau explores this distinction in his book, *The Practice of Everyday Life*:

At the outset, I shall make a distinction between space (*espace*) and place (*lieu*)...A place (*lieu*) is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence. It thus excludes the possibility of two things being in the same location (*place*)...A *space* exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it...In short, *space is a practiced place*. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers. In the same way, an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular place: a written text, i.e., a place constituted by a system of signs.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, "Moving from Solitude to Community," *Leadership Journal* 16, no. 2 (Spring 1995), accessed March 17 2015, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/1995/spring/51280.html>.

<sup>59</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 117.



An alien's living place is like a map. It was and is being designed according to certain plans and strategies. Streets and districts are planned, divided and partitioned. Likewise, ways of thinking, belief systems and customs are built around those plans and strategies. A place, then, divides "here" and "there," such as who is "in" and who is "out" of its boundary. Therefore, an operating principle in a relationship is "to possess," so that it inevitably leads to mimetic desire/rivalry. In this sense, a place prefers settlement and centralization.

One example is the people who lived under the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire had strategies to build its "place." The empire planned, divided and partitioned, as they did for their own philosophy, theology and norms. They separated "here" from "there." The Roman Empire did not allow anyone or any group to disturb their planned place. The same application goes for the Babylonian Empire, where the exiled Israelites lived; and again to the place(s) within the bigger place of the empire that the Pharisees and Sadducees built, keeping others from their partitioned boundaries.

An alien's spiritual living "space," on the contrary, is like a tour. To know a place, one must ask "where" and find it on a map. On the contrary, to know a space, one rather asks "what," because it is more important to know what to do in that place. Therefore, space is unsettled, peripheral and moves. In this space, aliens walk, journey and sojourn. Even though they are confined in a certain place, they are able to take different trajectories, shortcuts and detours:

...their (consumers) trajectories form unforeseeable sentences, partly unreadable paths across a space. Although they are composed with the vocabularies of established languages (those of television, newspapers, supermarkets, or museum

sequences) and although they remain subordinated to the prescribed syntactical forms (temporal modes of schedules, paradigmatic orders of spaces, etc.), the trajectories trace out the ruses of other interests and desires that are neither determined nor captured by the systems in which they develop.<sup>60</sup>

A space gives meaning to a place. For the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), the well was a place where she was continuously marginalized. However, the encounter with Jesus changed the place to a certain space where she could now worship God in spirit and truth, and where she was able to drink the living water, gushing up to receive eternal life. Her place of living was operated by mimetic desire/rivalry, but her transformed place (= space) broke its mechanism. Likewise, while early Christians were living in the place the Roman Empire prescribed, they walked and sojourned “differently and freely.”

For this reason, the Eucharist was profoundly significant for early Christians. As it represented the body of Christ still mysteriously dwelling among them, for these Christians living as aliens in the Roman Empire “place,” keeping the Eucharist meant creating a completely different “space” in the empire. “...the body of Christ encourages individual Christians to create their own space in the place dominated by the institution.”<sup>61</sup> Through their practice of everyday life in keeping the Eucharist, they were creating a space where another kind of mimetic desire occurred to imitate the life of Jesus and his cross. They were building another kind of kingdom (space) in the midst of the Roman kingdom (place).

The Word creates a space on the map of a place: “Wisdom cries out in the street;

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<sup>60</sup> Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xviii.

<sup>61</sup> Min-Ah Cho, “Corpus Christi, To Be Eaten and To Be Written: Questioning the Act of Writing in Hadewijch of Antwerp and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha” (PhD diss., Emory University, 2010), 20.

in the squares she raises her voice. At the busiest corner she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks” (Proverbs 1:20-21). On the streets of this present kingdom, the Word takes own path. In the squares and at the busiest corners of an alien’s living place, the Word weaves a new kind of kingdom fabric. During this mysterious formation process, it should also be noted that place and space coexist: “Place cannot be realized without the space that makes its social relations possible. Space cannot exist without place because space is in need of a place that it can use as a reference to assign.”<sup>62</sup> A place is a page where aliens author and claim their own space by writing the text. Space is a practiced place for aliens.

Wisdom/the Word cries out in the street of the aliens. The ways and thoughts of God are radically different than the mechanism of a place called the world: “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9). A place where its mimetic rivalry mechanism works has its own grammars. However, a space where the Word forms and creates has different ones:

We are putting no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labours, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honour and dishonour, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything. (2 Corinthians 6:3-10)

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<sup>62</sup> Cho, “Corpus Christi, To Be Eaten and To Be Written,” 107-108.

### ***Story as Medium & Spirituality of the Cross***

In this sense, the alien's community in everyday life is a hermeneutical one: it interprets and reinterprets its contexts, not only the past, but the present. Narratives in the Bible - especially Jesus' parables - are not confined to the past events for the people who lived thousands of years ago. Alien Christians continue to bring past stories into their "now," and struggle to find the answer for how things actually work out in the living of their everyday lives. They bring their memory to the present, and blend it with the biblical narratives.

Harry Harootunian explains this hermeneutical relationship between the past and the present in this way:

But because the present became the primary and privileged temporality - against which all other moments would be measures - he (Walter Benjamin) called for a "Copernican revolution" of memory that would reverse the conventional catalogue and base its procedure not on the fixed reality of the past - as practiced by historians seeking to reproduce it as it actually was and thus establish continuity between the past and the present - but, rather, on the actuality of the present. The now of everydayness would stand in a dialectical relationship to the past that it would construct.<sup>63</sup>

Alien Christians are called to pay close attention to the past, while thinking through the difficult questions for the present in their spiritual space at their peripheral place, the foreign land. In this way, the narrative of the Bible in the past can be liberating ones for their present.

The parables of Jesus are not archaic. McLuhan's famous dictum, *The Medium is the Message*, is a valuable analogy to understand Jesus' story as being incarnate. The medium of the gospel is not exclusively the printed words, but a divine life lived in

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<sup>63</sup> Harootunian, *History's Disquiet*, 3.

human flesh. The spirit comes upon flesh, and the Word becomes incarnate in the place of this world. The living *logos* walks among people. No longer merely printed on a page, the gospel is printed in Jesus, and he writes the gospel with his life on the pages of human hearts. The medium and the message are truly one and the same. He is the gospel, and the gospel is him. God's gospel for humanity is enfleshed and embedded in Jesus. He is the convergence of the medium and the message. Jesus does not dispatch from heaven a printed doctrinal book to humanity, but gives himself. By the same token, alien Christians are called to offer the world the gospel story not as contents, but as their lives that carry his stories so that they become another medium.

The aliens' faith community is the same. C. S. Lewis says, "The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became Man for no other purpose."<sup>64</sup> In this sense, the New Testament understood church as *ecclesia* (literally, "those called out"). This referred to the new remnant community of believers gathered to praise and serve God in response to the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>65</sup> This also referred to a unique and transformed way of being human in relationship not only with God, but also with other persons. Therefore, the *ecclesia* always had to present herself both in the forum of God and in the forum of the world, for she stood for God before the world, as well as standing for the world before God.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Group, 1978), 169-170.

<sup>65</sup> Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 189.

<sup>66</sup> Jurgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*. trans., Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 1.

In Matthew 28:18-20, before going up to heaven after the resurrection, Jesus said:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make *disciples* of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.”

A disciple of Christ is the one who believes in his teachings, rests on his sacrifice, imbibes his spirit and imitates his examples portrayed in his stories.

However, it also needs to be noted that the locus of Jesus’ story is never the center. Likewise, the locus of alien disciples is never the center. An alien’s life is tough. Their life place - marginal and peripheral - is tough as well. Nonetheless, aliens can create an inner “space” as a fruit of spiritual resistance. At the same time, the real presence of aliens/immigrants can create an inner collective and social “space” in a society. Their peripheral place then becomes a positive one, not only for themselves, but for others. Since his term in papal office, Pope Francis has emphasized the concept of the periphery, in a positive way:

There is a tension between the center and the periphery.... We must get out of ourselves and go toward the periphery. We must avoid the spiritual disease of the Church that can become self-referential: when this happens, the Church itself becomes sick. It’s true that accidents can happen when you go out into the street, as can happen to any man or woman. But if the Church remains closed onto itself, self-referential, it grows old. Between a Church that goes into the street and gets into an accident and a Church that is sick with self-referentiality, I have no doubts in preferring the first.<sup>67</sup>

In other words, the church is called to live “missionally,” and so is the alien. The

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<sup>67</sup> Alexander Stille, “Pope Francis Against Rome,” *The New Yorker*, March 13, 2013. Accessed October 6, 2015. <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/pope-francis-against-rome>.

alien Christians are called to strive in imitating Jesus' life. Jesus was an alien, and his ministry was missional and peripheral: "For as the biblical accounts of his ministry make quite clear, Jesus did not identify this spot with the center of worldly political power (Rome), with the leaders of the cult (the Sadducees), or even with the champions of popular piety (the Pharisees). He identified it rather with those on the margins of political and religious orders alike."<sup>68</sup>

As discussed in Chapter One, Christendom had ended, but there remains the future of Christianity. The Church must get out of becoming self-referential. In other words, the church is called to be free from its archaic Christendom mentality. The early Christians continued to live at their peripheral place under the Roman Empire as well as the dominant Hellenistic philosophy. In continuing to nurture their space of spiritual resistance through the stories of Jesus' cross and the resurrection, the future of Christianity can be brighter than ever.

In relation to the hope for the future Christianity, Girard understands the story of the Bible to actually demythicize the myth of human history. The myth is the scapegoat mechanism, the foundation of human culture. Human desire is mimetic (borrowed from others); mimetic rivalry originates conflicts; conflicts become violent; the scapegoat mechanism comes into play to resolve violence; and finally, concluding the scapegoat is guilty, while others remain innocent. This mechanism has long been hidden in human history, but the Bible reveals and renounces the mechanism: the scapegoat is actually innocent while the mimetic crowd is not.

The point is that the stories of the Bible reveal the deepest hidden human nature,

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<sup>68</sup> Ian A. McFarland, *Listening to the Least: Doing Theology From the Outside In* (Cleveland: United Church Press, 1998), 81.

turn things upside down, and then create a new storied world in the hearts of the people (those who have ears to hear). Girard explains the power of the Bible in this way: "... I use the metaphor of an animal hide that, instead of being worn with the smooth and lustrous fur on the outside, is turned inside out to display the bloody flesh of the victim."<sup>69</sup> This revelation contained in the stories upheld the small number of the disciples: "... this *episteme* is the very basis of the evangelical dissidence embodied by Christ's disciples."<sup>70</sup> The stories were especially important for the early alien disciples; they were their primary source of empowerment and eventually, they changed the world: "It is here that the Gospels exhibit their decisive originality. Not only do they not follow the crowd in condemning the victim, but the importance of the recalcitrant *minority* is emphasized by the role played by the eleven faithful apostles in the Gospels."<sup>71</sup>

In this sense, the presence of the small number of the early alien disciples was a privileged agent of the kingdom of God in the Roman/Hellenistic world. As they carried these stories to the world in which certain mechanisms (e.g., scapegoat mechanism) were working, the stories were able to create a different space in an established place within the empire. Similar to the presence of the minority disciples who carried the stories, the presence of the alien minority Christians can do the same:

A foreigner amongst us, the bearer of the visible stigma of difference, since he or she moves with the marks of an idiom, a tradition, usages, tastes, and behavior that are not familiar and in which we fail to see ourselves, the immigrant teaches us how to circulate in our language and our customs, and adapts to our material and symbolic universe. So different from ourselves, the immigrant is also the figure who already resembles us, whose destiny anticipates our own. He or she is the exemplary figure imposed by modernity, with the abandonment of our

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<sup>69</sup> Girard, *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*, 51-52.

<sup>70</sup> Girard, *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*, 52.

<sup>71</sup> Girard, *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*, 52. (Italics emphasized)



familiar points of reference, the adaptation to other codes, the acquisition of new ways of thinking and acting. The immigrant has already faced this test of imposed change, of obligatory displacement, and has faced it successfully, since immigrants are amongst us, the recognizable bearer of their original identity, of their difference.<sup>72</sup>

In the place of mimetic desire/rivalry, alien Christians may be able to create a different space within it - imitation of Jesus Christ and his stories. In the place of self-actualization, they may be able to create a space called “self-emptying.” In the place of spirituality of the self-enthroned, they may be able to create a space called, “spirituality of the cross.” “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness” (Philippians 2:5-7). To be an imitator of Jesus and his stories, alien Christians may pray:

I make myself nothing with Thee, Lord. I make Thee the entire sacrifice of my pride, of the vanity which has possessed me up to the present. Help my weak beginning. Keep from me the occasions of my falling. ‘Turn my eyes that I see not vanity,’ that I see only Thee, and that I see myself before Thee. It will be then that I shall know what I am and who Thou art (Francois de Salignac Fenelon, 1651-1715).<sup>73</sup>

This self-emptying imitation of Jesus Christ through his stories does not stem from defeatism or fatalism; it is far from them. It is from spiritual empowerment and resistance. It is an eschatological resistance, confessing even though “...about that day or hour no one knows” (Mark 13:32), but “your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”

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<sup>72</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Capture of Speech and Other Political Writings*, trans., Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 133, quoted in Ben Highmore, *Michel de Certeau: Analyzing Culture* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 158.

<sup>73</sup> Marva J. Dawn, *Powers, Weakness, and the Tabernacling of God: The 2000 Schaff Lectures*, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 61.

(Matthew 6:10). The alien immigrant Christians live in a place of uncertainty, like the early alien Christians lived. They have, then, a choice between either living with blind routines (time as *chronos*) or living eschatologically (time as *kairos*). Since they do not know the eschatological time but at the same time immensely struggle to live eschatologically, they may be able to bring that eschatological time to their present everyday life place, to create a space of spiritual resistance (“beware and keep alert,” Mark 13:32).

During this spiritual movement/process, they may be able to experience a real transformation:

This dynamic of emptying and of transcendence accurately defines the transformation of the Christian consciousness in Christ. It is a kenotic transformation, an emptying of all the contents of ego-consciousness to become a void in which the light of God or the glory of God, the full radiation of the infinite reality of his being and love, are manifested.<sup>74</sup>

For alien Christians, the story of Jesus is the main resource for their spiritual reflection as well as contemplation to form a new identity in their inner space. Kenneth Leech therefore understands spiritual reflection/contemplation is a form of resistance, while giving an example of the “dark night of the soul” in St. John of the Cross:

In the darkness of contemplation, the idols and limited concepts of God are dissolved, faith is purified, and one is led to a deeper level of knowing in which the individual is transformed and made whole. He is liberated through darkness from idols within and without. Thus the truly contemplative soul is a soul who sees clearly, sees too clearly for comfort... in a society where the machine seeks to control man’s consciousness, contemplation must become a form of resistance.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Thomas Merton, *Zen and the Birds of Appetite* (New York: New Direction, 1968), 153, quoted in Kenneth Leech, *The Social God* (London: Sheldon Press, 1981), 44.

<sup>75</sup> Leech, *The Social God*, 48-49.

The Bible is the best tool for alien Christians to form a new identity in their foreign land - that of Jesus Christ, as Jesus himself imitated God his Father. As Girard understands, the story of the Bible demythicizes human myth by liberating a person through darkness from the false idol of mimetic rivalry. Through its stories, one can create an alternative way in one's inner space. Jesus' stories are for everyone since "[T]he superiority of the Bible cannot be defined in terms of race, people, or nation; it is not at all ethnocentric."<sup>76</sup> However, it needs to be noted that the Bible's revelation and liberating power can be more possible to the Christians who understand their identity as aliens, as the early Christians did two millennia ago: "Revelation...operated only within recalcitrant minorities - within *remnants* that, although they were not powerful enough to overcome majority opinion, were nonetheless influential enough to guide the compilation of the holy Scriptures and shape the great traditions of Judaism and Christianity."<sup>77</sup>

Those recalcitrant minorities who had the powerful stories of the Bible were resistant to the worldly order; so are the immigrant alien Christians. They keep creating an alternative space in a place of foreign land, through and by the transformative stories in the Bible. As the parables of Jesus Christ largely contain the Kingdom above, the space aliens are creating is a different kind than that of the Kingdom below. These aliens are called to follow the footsteps of the early minority Christians: "The protesting minority is so minuscule, so lacking in prestige...However, its heroism will enable it not only to continue but to write, or be responsible for the writing of, the accounts that will be told and proclaimed throughout the world and that will spread everywhere the

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<sup>76</sup> Girard, *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*, 37.

<sup>77</sup> Girard, *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*, 37.

subversive knowledge of scapegoats unjustly condemned.”<sup>78</sup>

Jesus’ parables are bloodstained stories. Not only are there many stories of him containing much violence, but they also carry subversive messages: self-emptying/sacrifice, forgiveness, grace, eschatological assurance of kairos, vindication, to name just a few. The spirituality of the cross: this is formed in the alien Christians’ inner space, by and through the grace of the stories. The stories empower and equip them and give an alternative hermeneutic perspective about their saturated earthly world. Through the power of the stories, they can now boast not for their powers but for weakness, “for power is made perfect in weakness” (1 Corinthians 12:9). Through the world in Jesus’ stories to be shed in their inner space, they can now embrace the paradox of the cross: “For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Through the liberating and enlightening power of Jesus’ parables, they can pray this prayer from their inner space in their foreign place:

Lord, High and Holy, Meek and Lowly,  
 Thou hast brought me to the Valley of Vision  
     where I live in the depths but see Thee in the heights;  
     hemmed in by mountains of sin I behold Thy glory.  
 Let me learn by paradox that the way down is the way up,  
     that to be low is to be high,  
     that the broken heart is the healed heart,  
     that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit,  
     that the repenting soul is the victorious soul,  
     that to have nothing is to possess all,  
     that to bear the cross is to wear the crown,  
     that to give is to receive,  
     that the valley is the place of vision.  
 Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from deepest wells,  
     and the deeper the wells the brighter Thy stars shine.

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<sup>78</sup> Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, 188.

Let me find Thy light in my darkness,  
 Thy life in my death,  
 Thy joy in my sorrow,  
 Thy grace in my sin,  
 Thy riches in my poverty,  
 Thy glory in my valley.

(Prayer of an anonymous Puritan)<sup>79</sup>

## EXEGETICAL EXPLORATION OF THREE PARABLES

As discussed in Chapter One, there are fifty-five parables of Jesus in the books of Matthew, Mark and Luke. If similar parables are combined, there are thirty-eight parables. Snodgrass categorizes all these parables into nine: grace and responsibility, lostness, the sower, the present kingdom, about Israel, about discipleship, about money, concerning God and prayer and future eschatology.<sup>80</sup> For the purpose of the current study as well as the survey project, the author has chosen three parables, each from one of the Synoptic gospel books with differently relevant themes to Korean-Canadian young immigrants: Matthew 20:1-16 (The Laborers in the Vineyard; about discipleship and grace for the late laborers), Mark 4:26-32 (The Growing Seed and the Mustard Seed; about present kingdom and mysterious growth) and Luke 15:11-32 (The Compassionate Father and His Two Lost Sons; about lostness and restored identity).

### ***Matthew 20:1-16 (The Laborers in the Vineyard)***

The setting of this parable is found in the verses previous to the main passage. From Matthew 19:13-20:34, there are teachings about status, wealth, greed and

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<sup>79</sup> Dawn, *Powers, Weakness, and the Tabernacling of God*, 66-67.

<sup>80</sup> Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, viii-ix.

discipleship. Especially Peter's question to Jesus in Matthew 19:27 sets the tone of this parable: "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?"

Furthermore, one incident right after this story from verse 20 encircles the theme as well: the request of the mother of James and John to anoint one at Jesus' right hand and the other at left hand when Jesus is enthroned. Therefore, this parable tells about one's inner desire to be treated higher than others. It is about comparison, competition, jealousy and envy.

The key to interpreting this parable is found in verse 10: "So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius." The first hired laborers saw that the lastly hired ones received a denarius – the amount the vineyard owner and the first hired laborers agreed on the contract – so that they expected more because they thought they deserved more than the lastly hired ones. One denarius was an average daily wage at that time, and this means that a head of household needed to earn at least this amount a day for his family to survive another day. The first hired ones received what was agreed upon just as the lastly hired ones received the same so that all their families could survive another day. However, the first hired ones complained as they started comparing to the lastly hired ones.

The first hired laborers thought they deserved more but received what was promised. The lastly hired ones thought they deserved less but received what was promised. When one gets into a sense of entitlement, everything becomes one's credit so that one starts dividing people who deserve a thing or not. Entitlement, comparison, competition, jealousy, envy and self-enthronment are the enemy of one's spiritual journey to fulfillment.

The alien Christians can identify themselves with the lastly hired laborers, as they came to the new land late. In the new foreign land, their immigrant life won't be fulfilled by comparison, competition, or entitlement. The grace of God is sufficient. It doesn't become smaller or greater by comparing with others in the foreign land. In this sense, the alien Christians are called to deeply recognize the grace of God in their everyday lives. They are called to take their own unique journey while remembering the companionship of the grace of God.

***Mark 4:26-32 (The Growing Seed and the Mustard Seed)***

These two parables appear only in the book of Mark, and both stories are about the kingdom of God: “[Jesus] also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like”” (Mark 4:26). All the gospel writers proclaim the kingdom of God is already here with us. Mark is the same as it portrays some signs when the kingdom of God is present among us – the blind receive sight; the lame walk; the demon cast out; the deaf hear; and the good news is preached to the poor. However, this raises a question for alien Christians (two thousand years ago as well as today): “If the kingdom of God is here within us, then what are these things that I see in this present kingdom of the world? Where is the kingdom of God in my life? The kingdom of this world is too powerful.” The kingdom of God appears too small to be recognized.

Jesus gives these parables to them. The kingdom of God is like the seed, and it is too small to recognize. However, this small seed contains life forces, and “[A]ll by itself the soil produces grain – first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head”(Mark 4:28). The seed is very small to recognize, but it produces all by itself. “All

by itself” means “without any noticeable causation.” In other words, the way the small seed grows and produces is a hidden mystery. The farmer seems to do everything to make this possible, but this organic process is actually beyond the farmer’s endeavor and hard labor. The process of the kingdom of God being planted, growing and producing is similar. Every Jesus’ follower does not expect that the seed sprouts and grows in front one’s own eyes but accepts the reality that there is a mysterious life force is hidden in the seed.

The mustard seed is the smallest seed one plants in the ground (Mark 4:31). The presence of immigrants in the foreign land is the same. The alien Christian’s self-understanding is the same: “I am the smallest in this strange new land.” Their life may seem small and insignificant; however, God plants the seed in their hearts and lives. It then grows and offers branches that other people can perch in its shade (Mark 4:32). It is not because the alien Christian’s life is big, but God is big so that God does mysteriously wonderful things in their lives.

The book of Mark contains a unique movement. Mark portrays that Jesus seems not knowing where he is exactly going, while for Matthew and Luke Jesus is affirmative. Therefore, Mark illustrates that Jesus walks on the journey with much spiritual struggles. The purpose of his life is hidden, and during the process of the journey, it is gradually but surely found. The alien Christian’s spiritual journey is very similar. They wrestle and eagerly search for the ultimate meaning of life in the foreign land. This wrestling – movements – is in their smallest seed of immigrant life. This spiritual wrestling provides an opportunity for them to take the journey to fulfillment. They don’t fully comprehend the whole process: “Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and



grows, though he does not know how” (Mark 4:27). The alien Christians don’t know how this small seed of the kingdom of God grows and produces in their immigrant land.

Therefore, they are called to patiently wait. This waiting is not a passive one, but quite the opposite. They are called to proactively live and wait for God’s time when God will make all things beautiful.

***Luke 15:11-32 (The Compassionate Father and His Two Lost Sons)***

This is one of the best-known parables of Jesus. The setting of this parable is found in the previous verse: “But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them”” (Luke 15:2). The people with religious authority complained to Jesus because he embraced certain people who were considered sinners. Jesus often talks about complaining people. As discussed in the first parable of the current study, the first hired vineyard laborers complained to the owner (Matthew 20:1-16). A certain group of people complained when a woman broke an alabaster of expensive perfume and poured the perfume on Jesus’ head (the disciples complained in Matthew 26:6-13; the Pharisees complained in Luke 7:36-50; Judas Iscariot complained in John 12:1-8). All the people complained when Jesus stayed at Zacchaeus’ house (Luke 19:1-10). In this parable, the two sons complained to their father in different manners (see below).

Luke 15 is a chapter about “lost and found”: the lost sheep (1-7), the lost coin (8-10) and the lost sons (11-32). The chapter starts with one hundred sheep, then ten coins and concludes with two sons. In this way of telling stories, the main theme is successfully dramatized and emphasized.

The younger son was not satisfied in his life under the roof of the father's house. He desired to be free without being bound by the father. Therefore, he declared his share of the estate, while it was customary that a son becomes only eligible to ask for his share once the father has passed away. The father was a like dead person to the younger son. He cared for his own life, but not the father's. He needed the father who was beneficial to him. He loved the father for his own sake.<sup>81</sup>

Later in a faraway foreign land, he squandered his wealth in wild living. In the time of severe famine, he was so desperately in need that he longed to fill his stomach with the pods of the pigs. This was the point when he started his journey to face his true self. He used to desire his identity to be defined without the father's presence. Now, he realized he sinned against the father and went back to not only the father's house but the father himself (Luke 15:18). He thought he was not worthy to be called the father's son. Therefore, he decided to make himself like one of the father's hired men. His identity was not yet restored and realized.

While this younger son was still a long way off, the father saw him and, was filled with compassion for him, ran to him, threw his arms around and kissed him. The ninth century Aggadic Midrash, *Pesiqta Rabbati* 44.9, explains this kind of father in the following way:

Consider the parable of a prince who was far away from his father – a hundred days' journey away. His friends said to him: 'Return to your father.' He replied: 'I cannot: I have not the strength.' Thereupon his father sent word, saying to him: 'Come back as far as you can according to your strength and I will go the rest of the way to meet you.' So the Holy One, blessed be He, says to Israel: *Return unto*

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<sup>81</sup> Four Degrees of Love by Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) is applicable here: 1) Love of Self for Self's Sake, 2) Love of God for Self's sake, 3) Love of God for God's sake, and 4) Love of Self for God's sake. The younger son in the story seems to fall in the second degree of love.

*Me, and I will return unto you (Mal 3:7).<sup>82</sup>*

Even though the younger son made himself like one of the father's hired men, the father restored his identity: "[T]his son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (Luke 15:24).

The father then threw a big party. Everyone in the house celebrated, except the older son. Throughout all those years, he stayed in the house and loyal to his father. However, similar to his younger brother, he considered himself not a son to the father: "All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders" (Luke 15:29). Both of them didn't fully recognize their true identity as the father's son.

Just as he ran to his younger son, the father also ran to his older son. He even "pleaded with him" (Luke 15:28) and said to him, "My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours" (Luke 15:31). While both sons had the misconception about their true identity as a hired man or a slave, they had always been precious sons to the father. The younger son's wild living in a distant country as well as the older son's wild inner attitude in a proximate distant to the father didn't destroy the father's heart towards his two sons.

In this sense, Jesus calls every hearer to be like the father. This father is a running father. This father is still saying to every alien Christian in the foreign land: "Come back to me as far as you can. I will run to you the rest of the way." Like Jesus himself came to this humanity, "[W]ho, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled

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<sup>82</sup> Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 123.

himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:6-8).

Therefore, this story is a call for alien Christians to be like the father who is truly free from any bondage – comparison, competition, mimetic desire, jealousy, envy and distorted self-identity – so that they may freely embrace their immigrant life, celebrate the life, and be in solidarity with other people in their foreign land.

This chapter has so far explored some of the biblical/theological foundations in relation to the alien Christians’ – especially Korean-Canadian immigrants – spiritual formation process with the parables of Jesus. Spiritual inner/outer movements and the Word are two primary forces behind the theological understanding of their unique identity formation in the foreign land. This chapter has also suggested that their life context can be a liberating one, not only for their personal spiritual journey, but also for the journey of solidarity with other people in the new land. This chapter has as well explained why the author has chosen three specific parables and provided some of the exegetical points that were delivered to the participants of the survey project. Before analyzing some of the important findings from the survey, Chapter Three will first discuss some of the chosen academic and pastoral resources that are relevant to this current study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Spiritual formation of a Christian is a life-long journey to be transformed into Christlikeness through the mysterious empowerment of the Word, of prayer, and of reflection so that the believer lives to the fullness of life. In this sense, the spirituality of aliens is called to be a life of congruence. It must be a holistic practice of attending to the details of congruence, between ends and means and between doing and being. It covers one's body, social context and unique nature of living, for example, the immigrant life in Canada.

However, the spirituality of aliens is called not to be about uniformity but about unity. It is not about producing all the same Christian aliens who walk on the same journey. They will always remain different but in unity with Christ and with each other. As Peterson points out, "[Spiritual theology] is a protest against theology depersonalized into information about God; it is a protest against theology functionalized into a program of strategic planning for God."<sup>1</sup> Christ plays in ten thousand places for unity with him.

Therefore spirituality of aliens is congruent with three aspects: the Word, prayer and reflection. As their spirituality is closely connected with their immigrant life, it is a lifelong process that is continuously dynamic. It is not a one-time event, though there may be significant events on their journey. It also requires the whole person: body, mind, soul, will, and heart. It includes one's whole life including intellectual, physical, spiritual,

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<sup>1</sup> Eugene Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 1.

emotional, volitional, and relational aspects. The Word, prayer and reflection are the main faculties for their spiritual formation. In this Literature Review, therefore, these three will be discussed based on various literature sources. As this study explores Korean-Canadian immigrants' spiritual formation with the Word in their unique life context, it will then add a section on the literature of resident aliens and how this theme has informed the current study project.

### **THE WORD AND SPIRITUALITY OF ALIENS**

The Word has a formative character. It is the instrument by which God gives forms and fills up creation. One's spiritual formation happens with the Word. The Bible is the main agent for spiritual formation. God's Spirit is with the Scripture, and it is the most important guide for one's spiritual journey. One's lives are interpreted through the stories of the Scripture. As they open the pages of the Scripture, they are invited to open the pages of their hearts and immigrant stories as well. As they open their eyes to read the Scripture, they are also invited to open their eyes to see the footprints of God - often hidden - in their lives. As they open their ears to listen to the Scripture, they are invited to respond to God's call to their lives. An alien Christian's spiritual formation thus must be some form of faithful articulation of the Word of God.

Richard Foster, in his book, *Life with God: Reading the Bible for Spiritual Transformation*, points out that average American Christians have nine Bibles in their home. Korean immigrant Christians in Canada are likewise. This means that they are searching for religious and spiritual meaning in their lives. For alien Korean immigrant

Christians, the Word is more than self-help, more than how to be successful in their immigrant lives and more than how to lead their small immigrant community effectively. The focus is not that they own x number of Bibles but that the Word owns them. In the presence of the Word, they are called to let the incarnated story of God flow within their lives. This is the “Immanuel principle” as Foster emphasizes: “...the unity of the Bible is discovered in the development of life ‘with God’ as a reality on earth, centered in the person of Jesus. We might call this the Immanuel Principle of life.”<sup>2</sup>

Michael Casey’s book, *Sacred Reading: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina*, offers the groundwork of *lectio divina*. Casey, a Cistercian monk and prior of *Tarrawarra Abbey* in Victoria, Australia, invites one to read the Word with different attitudes and expectations. He challenges that *lectio divina* is more than a way to grasp words on a page, more than an exclusivity to monks who one may think have enough solitude time, and more than a technique for a devout Christian.

Henri Nouwen strongly emphasizes that in spiritual life, one needs a space – time and place.<sup>3</sup> Therefore the important spiritual discipline is to make oneself available to God’s Word, as God first made Godself available to humanity. In the midst of immigrants’ busy lives, they can draw near to God’s Word in solitude. It is a matter of their willingness and commitment to make themselves attentive to the Scripture. In this sense, for alien Christians, *lectio divina* is more than one of many methods on how-to-read-the-Bible. It must be their life pattern and habit so that the Word becomes incarnated and transforms their inner/outer lives in the foreign land.

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<sup>2</sup> Richard J. Foster, *Life With God: Reading the Bible for Spiritual Transformation* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), 7-8.

<sup>3</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, “Moving from Solitude to Community,” *Leadership Journal* 16, no. 2 (Spring 1995), accessed March 17 2015, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/1995/spring/51280.html>.

They are invited to take a bite of the Word into their mouth, taste it, chew it over and over again, and swallow it. In practicing *lectio divina*, they may have some control over the first three steps, *lectio* (reading), *meditatio* (meditation) and *oratio* (prayer). However, once they swallow the Word, *contemplatio* (contemplation), they can't claim control; the food inside will carry out the rest of the process itself. The Word of the living God will then be incarnated in them and their lives. They must not merely read the Scripture; they have to eat the book. One can never separate spiritual formation from the Word. Spiritual formation goes with the Scripture. One may or may not have some spiritual experiences, but if they do, the experiences must not be far from the teachings of the Scripture. Those experiences then facilitate one's understanding of the Scripture and deepen one's loving passion for the Scripture.

Through this process, this resident alien Christian may be able to integrate the Christian story of the Scripture into one's own alien life. A Singaporean systematic theologian, Simon Chan, therefore emphasizes the importance of contextualization in spiritual formation in conjunction with the Scripture:

But if Christian spirituality is to be understood in terms of personal (but not individualistic or private, since the Christian life is always defined by a person's concrete existence within a community) relationship with God, we must question the adequacy of a merely subjective definition. We are not primarily concerned about a phenomenological description of spirituality but about truth - as faithfulness to the "given" that defines the Christian community, not as the correspondence of a statement to some object "out there." This given is the Christian story revolving around the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth...What kind of life does the Christian story give rise to?...If the Christian community is a colony of "resident aliens," it is still a colony existing in a larger sociopolitical context. The shape of our spirituality, therefore, must be true to both the context in which we live and the Christian story.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life* (Downers Grove; IVP Academic, 1998), 15-16.



The Bible is thus recognized as foundational and important for one's thinking and living. In this respect, Alister E. McGrath summarizes the "fourfold sense of Scripture" that was developed during the later Middle Ages: literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical.<sup>5</sup> In relation with the notion above about Christian story, it should be noted that 'allegorical' sense of Scripture is especially important in terms of alien Christians' spiritual formation. McGrath explains this sense in this way:

Here, the passage was taken to have a symbolic meaning related to Christian doctrine. For example, the story of the exodus from Egypt could be understood as an allegory of the redemption of the world through Christ. This interpretation did not, it should be noted, involve denying that the exodus happened in history, or that it was of enormous importance to Israel. Rather, it involved the discernment of a deeper meaning beneath the surface of this historical event, so that the exodus can be seen as a kind of anticipation of redemption in Christ.<sup>6</sup>

The two scholars, Chan and McGrath, have successfully tried to combine theology and spirituality, as well as church and holy sacraments together. This is important aspect in Christian spirituality that every Christian (including aliens) who pursues theology and spirituality belongs to a certain church and practices the sacraments. At the same time, their theological development and spiritual journey don't happen in a void, but rather they happen within the church, and the sacraments play a very important role for that. The communal aspect of theology and spirituality must be considered if one wants to walk on the authentic spiritual journey.

On the other hand, Peterson explains the importance of the Bible in the realm of Christian spiritual formation with a theological ground, but at the same time with one's

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<sup>5</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1999), 83.

<sup>6</sup> McGrath, *Christian Spirituality*, 84.

actual life in mind. His writing is not just confined in the academia but engaged in the everyday life of Christians. He notes, “[T]he word ‘book’... suggests that the message God gives to us has meaning, plot, and purpose...God’s word is written, handed down, and translated for us so that we can enter the plot...Eating a book takes it all in, assimilating it into the tissues of our lives.”<sup>7</sup>

A resident alien Christian has stories and is continuously writing stories of his or her own life in a foreign land. The Bible invites one’s stories to plunge into the streams of God’s story. One enters the plot. Through this process, one’s life stories will be reinterpreted, redeemed, and exalted. One is invited to eat the book so that one is able to authentically interpret one’s own life stories. This is a process of self-understanding. In this way, the Word of God doesn’t become information but a life-changing and life-transforming agent.

“I might own a morocco leather Bible, having paid fifty dollars for it, but I don’t own the Word of God to do with what I want; God is sovereign. The Word of God is not my possession.”<sup>8</sup> One’s spiritual journey is the same. One doesn’t hold onto the Word of God, constantly worrying that one might lose the grip, but rather the Word of God upholds one like a little baby in mother’s embrace. “But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me” (Psalm 131:2). Therefore, one is called to eat this book. One can use intellect, experience and knowledge, but when one eats and swallows it, the Word is no longer under one’s control. One can’t control the nutrients from the food to go to certain parts of the inner

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<sup>7</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 20.

<sup>8</sup> Peterson, *Eat This Book*, 82.

body. The Word of God takes over, and the nutrients – love, passion, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness – will provide life force so that one may live life to the full.

## **PRAYER AND SPIRITUALITY OF ALIENS**

Spiritual formation is a movement. It is a journey and a pilgrimage. No one can achieve this overnight. One must come through one's own dark night of the soul. On the journey, one seeks transformation through the mysterious work of the Holy Scripture and the Holy Spirit. However, it never happens in a void. Spiritual formation is very much personal but never private. There is an inward movement of the spiritual formation, but there are more than that as it is a dynamic process that encompasses outward, upward, and downward movements as well.

Living as an alien in a foreign land is also dynamic. An alien is always on the move and continuously seeking one's true home (belongingness), like the prodigal sons in Jesus' parable. The youngest was seeking for his true home in a far away foreign land, while the eldest was seeking for his true home in his father's house.

Prayer is a movement. A person who prays always moves inward, outward, upward and downward. Prayer invites God's presence into one's everyday life. Prayer leads one to discernment about one's true identity and to articulation of the meaning of everyday life. As an iceberg has only 10% of its body above the water surface, while the other 90% is hidden, prayer invites one to examine this 90 %. In this sense, prayer is where one meets one's true self. Prayer is not just about one's religious activity or fanaticism. Rather, it leads one to discernment and articulation so that one may be able to

live one's alien life with some form of self-awareness and self-understanding. Therefore, the life of prayer is very crucial for alien Christian's spiritual formation.

It should be noted, however, that a life of prayer happens communally. Prayer is personal but never private; one's spiritual formation very much happens within the contexts of the local congregations. Local congregations are the organic vehicles to facilitate the practice of nurturing their members into "hermeneutic aliens." James C. Wilhoit emphasizes this aspect in this way: "[Absence of this communal aspect will] reduce spiritual formation to little more than religious self-help."<sup>9</sup> It is life together with others, in which spiritual formation actually occurs in relationship with God. "Other people are one of the most important sources of God's grace in our lives."<sup>10</sup>

Wilhoit's framework for spiritual formation helps an alien Christian better understand the life of prayer. The framework consists of receiving, remembering, responding and relating. Receiving invites one to embrace the reality of one's brokenness so that it would create space in one's heart where the Holy Spirit can work. Remembering leads one to the awareness of what God has done and doing now so that one may not fall into a trap of self-abasement from the first process but rather seek more God's grace and mercy. Responding is an inside out process where the grace one is receiving is poured out into the lives of the other people around in love and humble service. Then, relating reminds one that this process of spiritual formation is not a one-time event but rather a lifelong journey so that an alien Christian is encouraged to continuously seek for relationships in a community.

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<sup>9</sup> James C. Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 22.

<sup>10</sup> Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*, 177.

Prayer is also a language, not of lips but of souls. Peterson says, “As we listen in on Jesus as he talks and then participates with Jesus as he prays, I hope that together we, writer and readers, will develop a discerning aversion to all forms of depersonalizing godtalk and acquire a taste for and skills in the always personal language that God uses...”<sup>11</sup> In this regard, prayer and the Word are closely intertwined together. Jesus’ stories and one’s prayers never come out of depersonalization. When one tells stories and prays, one faces, interacts, and personalizes with someone. There is no pseudo-self. When Jesus tells the parables as well as prays, his language is always authentic and personal: “His language is just as local and present and personal with the Father who is in heaven as it is with his companions over meals at the table and while walking on the road. I want to insist that the language of Jesus in his prayers is neither less nor more himself, soul and body, than in his stories.”<sup>12</sup>

All languages are holy. With the same language, one may glorify God or not. With the language, one may inspire people into the presence of God or not. Therefore, in telling stories and in praying, one is called to be a steward of words. Jesus’ words were not just fun or inspiring but inviting the listeners to be transformed into the true self/true image of God. In telling the stories, Jesus always invited people to ‘participate and engage’ with their whole existence. Jesus brought out their true motives and intentions from their inner world and invited to face them. He then planted the Kingdom of God in their souls.

Peterson’s book thus leads readers to a renewed understanding of what Christian

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<sup>11</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, *Tell it Slant: A Conversation on the Language of Jesus in His Stories and Prayers* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 5.

<sup>12</sup> Peterson, *Tell It Slant*, 160.

ministry is all about. One of the easiest and most common ways to deal with issues of other people is 'stereotyping.' The Pharisees and religious leaders in Jesus' time didn't have to engage with others. They didn't have to share their life together. If Christian ministry is governed by this stereotyping, the unique and authentic story in each person's life wouldn't need to be heard. Jesus did the opposite, however. He didn't stereotype anyone he met or label anyone. He didn't prescribe a panacea to everyone he encountered. He rather engaged with each one's unique life story and invited each to dive into his new story of the kingdom of God, which eventually led one to the life of fullness. As Peterson says, life is more complex than we think; a congregation is more complex than we think; and a mature life of prayer is more complex than stereotypes.<sup>13</sup>

Gary Thomas' book, *Sacred Pathways*, resonates with Peterson's work. As a story of a person in the Bible needs not to be stereotyped, so does one's spirituality, especially in the life of prayer. One's life of prayer has its own colors, like a rainbow with many different colors. "And why should everybody be expected to love God the same way, anyway?"<sup>14</sup>

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men" (1 Corinthians 12:4-6). In the same Spirit, the unique way one relates to God and how one draws near to him are all sacred. If one tries to stereotype the way one prays, one may confine own spirituality and never give oneself the freedom to flourish in relationship with God.

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<sup>13</sup> Peterson, *Tell It Slant*, 141-142.

<sup>14</sup> Gary Thomas, *Sacred Pathways: Discover Your Soul's Path to God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2000), 17.

The prayer life of an alien Christian is much more diverse than one thinks. It is very complex so that an alien's journey to maturity is never identical to those of others. "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ... Now the body is not made up of one part but of many... But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body" (1 Corinthians 12:12, 14, 18-20).

Everyone is an alien in many different ways. In their religion, culture, socio-economic status, language and political stand, everyone is different from others. Elizabeth Conde-Frazier argues about this alienness: "Once an alien, I will always know what it means to be an alien. When reading in Genesis 23 about Abraham being a stranger and an alien. I know what it means. And I have always been comforted by 1 Peter, where the apostle Peter declares that Christians are to live as aliens and strangers in the world."<sup>15</sup>

Nonetheless, if one doesn't see differences in love, one would go to quite hostile directions: any form of assimilation/absorption, isolation, rejection/exclusion or elimination. Members of an ethno-cultural community are absorbed into another - generally larger and dominant - community. This implies the loss of the characteristics of the absorbed group, such as language, customs, ethnicity, and self-identity. St. Paul fought for this: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). To the early Christian churches, he pleaded them to be united, not to be uniformed.

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<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Steve Kang, and Gary A. Parrett, *A Many Colored Kingdom: Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 39.

If a society or group doesn't assimilate/absorb, then they may choose rejection. Aliens' presence and dignity simply get ignored by others. The woman caught in adultery, the prayer of the tax collector, and the vineyard workers who were hired one hour before the day work was finished, to name a few, were the ones to be rejected and ignored by certain groups. In this mindset, one would just dream of 'homogenous church.'<sup>16</sup>

A society or group may also try to eliminate the different ones. St. Paul once did this by persecuting Christians. Human history still remembers the Holocaust.<sup>17</sup> This world now also has refugee issues, especially in Europe. "When genuine diversity is either ignored or disallowed, the result is uniformity, not unity."<sup>18</sup> St. Paul thought it was worth dying for the unity in Christ. He understood every different one was somehow connected, not separated: "In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:21), "From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Ephesians 4:16).

In this sense, with the Scripture, prayer is one of the most important driving vehicles for alien Christians in the process of cultivating discernment and articulation within the context their own life. Foster in his book, *Prayer*, lists three movements of prayer - inward, upward and outward. Inward to the Son, upward to the Father, and outward to the Spirit. This Trinitarian understanding about prayer is helpful because it reminds alien Christians of prayer as movement: inward, upward and outward. As one's

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<sup>16</sup> Conde-Frazier, Kang and Parret, *A Many Colored Kingdom*, 9.

<sup>17</sup> Other present examples include such as the terror by Daesh with reference to Islam and the Buddhist nationalism in Myanmar as motivation for the genocide against the Rohingya people.

<sup>18</sup> Conde-Frazier, Kang and Parret, *A Many Colored Kingdom*, 15.



spiritual life is a journey, so is prayer. When one settles in, one is prone to fall into a numb relationship with God. It can be called ‘religiosity’ or ‘mannerism.’ One then draws a boundary line around one’s religion and spirituality and prematurely assumes the former as sacred while the latter as profane.

However, prayer moves the one who prays. It transforms the one who prays. Søren Kierkegaard thus says, “Prayer does not change God, but it changes him who prays.”<sup>19</sup> Alien Christians must not come to God in prayer to get what they want. They must not come to God in prayer to impress God so that God may offer what they desire. Rather they must come to God in prayer as God’s beloved. In a foreign land, they come to God in prayer naked, seeking that God may embrace their weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Their prayer doesn’t make God visible to them but more visible to God. In prayer, they come with their truest selves to ‘commune’ with God. They present just who they truly are to God. Therefore, prayer changes the one who prays.

Prayer invites alien Christians to relate to God as well as to others with their truest selves. Even in personal isolation in a foreign land, they relate to their community in prayer.

Prayer and personal isolation, we have been finding out, are incompatible. Yes, we must learn to be alone with God if we are ever to know true community with others. But prayer in isolation from all other Christians can never be a proper expression of fellowship with the three-in-one God who makes community possible.”<sup>20</sup>

Prayer empowers them to live in community with their authentic selves. Christian

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<sup>19</sup> James M. Houston, *The Prayer: Deepening Your Friendship with God* (Colorado Springs: Victor, 2007), 11.

<sup>20</sup> Houston, *The Prayer*, 314.

community for them is where they can be alone with God so that they can be with others in a loving relationship. Therefore, when they pray in communion with God in community, prayer deepens an intimate relationship with God, with others, and with their society. Prayer is personal, not private, and it is communal, not isolated.

### **REFLECTION AND SPIRITUALITY OF ALIENS**

In spiritual formation, reflection puts prayer together with the Scripture. Through reflection, an alien Christian examines one's soul on a deeper level. As reflection entails intentionality, one pays a careful attention to one's inner self as well as God's direction. Again, discernment and articulation are better developed on the ground of reflection. Reflection helps one listen to stories of Jesus more intentionally so that one may enter the contexts of the narratives. Reflection also helps one be more present to God, people around, and the self. In this way, reflection eventually leads one to substantive knowing. Questions within oneself can be evoked, rather than having one's final statement about life and God.

However, one lives in a world full of noises, inside and outside of the self. All new and ever evolving technologies captivate one's soul. Preconceived ideas that have been built throughout one's life also hinder one from being more attentive to the true self and the true God. An overtired is also an obstacle to discerning God's will and articulating one's identity and life context. One is very much saturated with all kinds of noises.

Similarly, Richard Peace's book resonates with the struggle of alien Christians:

“In fact, God’s presence pervades our world. God is not in hiding. The problem is with us. We don’t know where to look or what to expect. We do not seem to notice. We need to learn to notice. We need to engage in what I have come to call the ‘spiritual discipline of noticing God.’”<sup>21</sup> In ordinary life, in the Bible, in community, in creation/culture, and in church, they can cultivate their souls to notice God in these different venues.

Jesus’ life was busy and full of noises. A lot of actions filled the pages of the Bible: casting out demons, healing the sick, teaching the misunderstanding disciples, moving from one village to another, and receiving praises from people and accusations right after, to name a few. However, Jesus continuously tried to stay out of these noises and stay in solitude. At a solitude place, he heard the still, quiet voice of God, and that voice gave him strength to carry on his mission. Jesus created an inner space where he and his father encountered and interacted. Therefore, Jesus’ saying still echoes within the souls of alien Christians: “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear” (Mark 4:23).

The most practiced time of solitude reflection is Sunday, when one attends a worship service. Korean Christianity’s tradition prefers the expression “the Lord’s Day” over “Sabbath” to differentiate their Christian identity from the Jewish, as well as to emphasize the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It doesn’t have to be, however. The Sabbath doesn’t necessarily mean the Jewish practice of keeping Yahweh’s commandment or Jewish way of resting. Marva J. Dawn, in her book *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly*, emphasizes that Sabbath does not refer to a specific day but a day on which one can truly rest in God. It is the time when everything stops, as the Hebrew word “Sabbath”

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<sup>21</sup> Richard Peace, *Noticing God* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2012), 14.

originally means: to cease or desist.<sup>22</sup> While living under the bombardment of unceasing busyness in a foreign land, an alien Christian is invited to stop and rest in God's embracing arms on the Sabbath.

As mentioned above, the word Sabbath means to 'cease.' While a majority of busy aliens would interpret ceasing as having a vacation, Dawn challenges readers to cease from obsession to be productive and accomplished. In the pursuit of success-oriented life, the Sabbath invites one to cease so that one may discover the true meaning of life. Jesus ceased often: he stopped. In the midst of bombarding demands and hostility from the people, he ceased, rested, embraced, and had a feast with his father God and with other companions. During this Sabbath, he heard the voice from heaven: "You are my beloved; with you I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). Jesus heard this voice even though he hadn't accomplished anything yet – no sermons, no miracles, no followers, and no casting out demons. In this 'withoutness,' Jesus heard the voice from heaven and the voice kept him walking on the journey to the cross.

The Sabbath thus calls one to stop holding tight and start letting go. It is a spiritual movement from holding tight of many attachments to letting go of them so that one may find the true identity in the Creator God – "You are my beloved" – and be rather attached to God. As discussed in Chapter One, Christian spirituality seeks for time rather than place. An alien Christian's spirituality must not prioritize place in eagerness to fill the place to achieve some form of meaning of life. Immigrant life has largely been that way; the more you fill your place, the better you live your life. However, one must aim for time while not neglecting place. One's spiritual formation seeks for time (e.g., by

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<sup>22</sup> Marva J. Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), x-xi.

keeping the Sabbath wholly) so that one is touched by eternity that is permeated in one's time on earth. God created the world, and also ceased and made the ceasing time holy.

This discernment and articulation will give an alien Christian tremendous empowerment. In Jewish history, from the Exodus to Holocaust, many different powers of this world killed their places in the world, but they were never able to kill the Sabbath. It was not the Jews who kept the Sabbath, but the Sabbath that kept them. The same applies to the life of immigrants. In place, one wants to possess, but on the Sabbath, one is called to embrace what exists. In place, one desires to acquire, but on the Sabbath, one shares. In place, one is prone to exclude, but on the Sabbath, one rather embraces and includes differences. Dawn, in this sense, challenges alien Christians to move from the entanglement of place where they are so eager to possess and own things to the time of God where they cease to fill in their places, where they rest to be restored in God's image again, where they embrace God's will and plans, and where they feast and dance with God.

How to be present with God in one's life is also a very important matter to alien Christians. Gordon T. Smith, in echoing with Peace's book, elaborates on the issue in this way:

Every Christian should be able to answer two questions. First, what do you think Jesus is saying to you at this point in your life, in the context of the challenges and opportunities you are facing? Second (and just as critical), what indicators give you some measure of confidence that it is indeed Jesus speaking to you rather than someone or something else?<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, reflection of an alien Christian leads to a close union with God. This

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<sup>23</sup> Gordon T. Smith, *The Voice of Jesus: Discernment, Prayer and the Witness of the Spirit* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2003), 9.

union is in love and expressed in one's personal life with deeds, thoughts and words. To do this, one must face with false selves. There are two false selves: false self and false religious self. Characteristics of false self are fearful, protective, possessive, manipulative, destructive, self-promoting, indulgent and discriminating.<sup>24</sup>

These false selves are so deeply ingrained within oneself that it is difficult to notice them. However, the false religious self is much more difficult to notice. It thinks as long as one is religious, one's relationship with God is okay. However, "Our religious false self may be rigorous in religiosity, devoted in discipleship and sacrificial in service - without being in loving union with God."<sup>25</sup>

The characteristics of the false self listed above are also applicable to religious false self. This religious false self, however, is much more dangerous, as one's true self is not in union with God in love but is confident that one is in that relationship. It's like the prodigal son's older brother. The prodigal son knew he went too far away from his father's presence. It was obvious that he made a mistake and needed to come back home. On the other hand, the older brother was in his father's house all his life. He was devoted to helping his father, taking care of family business, and always being loyal to the father. Despite all this, Jesus portrayed him also a prodigal in different way. The older brother said to his father, "Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends" (Luke 15:29). All those years while staying in his father's house, he thought he was a slave to the father. To him, the father's house was no more than a mere place,

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<sup>24</sup> M. Robert Mulholland JR, *The Deeper Journey: The Spirituality of Discovering Your True Self* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2006), 44.

<sup>25</sup> Mulholland, *The Deeper Journey*, 47.

where mimetic rivalry was only present. It was never a space to him, where he recognized the father's loving and forgiving embrace and could cease mimetic rivalry against his younger brother and even the father and took a rest in the embrace. In God's house in Jerusalem, likewise, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, religious leaders, and priests kept all the religious rules, and they thought they were in a good relationship with God. However, they were in fact far away from God's presence.

In this sense, reflection urges every alien Christian to take an authentic journey of spiritual formation. One needs to go into solitude time/space in prayer to internalize the stories of Jesus with one's lived place of practiced life. Nouwen notes,

In solitude we realize that nothing human is alien to us, that the roots of all conflict, war, injustice, cruelty, hatred, jealousy, and envy are deeply anchored in our own heart. In solitude our heart of stone can be turned into a heart of flesh, a rebellious heart into a contrite heart, and a closed heart into a heart that can open itself to all suffering people in a gesture of solidarity.<sup>26</sup>

Reflection in solitude offers true home to an alien Christian. It gives strength and fruitfulness to the Scripture. "[W]ords are meant to disclose the mystery of the silence from which they come."<sup>27</sup> Jesus says "The words I say to you I do not speak as from myself. It is the Father, living in me, who is doing this work" (John 14:10). Silence in solitude reflection is not just speaking no words. It is a spiritual practice during which one tries to silence the inner – often mimetic – desire to attract attention to oneself. Through this spiritual discipline of reflection, an alien Christian cultivates his or her heart.

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<sup>26</sup> Henry J. M. Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart: Connecting with God Through Prayer, Wisdom, and Silence* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1981), 25.

<sup>27</sup> Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart*, 41.

In this mode of reflection, one's understanding of prayer changes. "[P]rayer is never the first word; it is always the second word. God has the first word. Prayer is answering speech; it is not primarily 'address' but 'response'"<sup>28</sup> In reflection, one admits that if one's prayers are not uprooted from the soil of the Word, they are flat and meaningless. Reflection in prayer and in the Word is a jewel given to humanity as it brings communion with God. One stops talking and lets God speak. In the mode of reflection, one reads the stories of Jesus with an expectation to hear his voice. One doesn't sabotage the stories but rather lets the stories speak. In the same manner, Peterson rightfully interprets Psalm 40:6: "ears thou hast dug for me."<sup>29</sup> One asks God to dig one's ears so that one may listen to his voice. "God gets a pick and shovel and digs through the cranial granite, opening a passage that will give access to the interior depths, into the mind and heart."<sup>30</sup>

However, it should be noted that reflection is never isolated from community. Even though there are individual components, reflection eventually consummates in community. Spiritual formation is personal but never private. Therefore, Peterson emphasizes spiritual direction. It takes place "when two people agree to give their full attention to what God is doing in one (or both) of their lives and seek to respond in faith"<sup>31</sup> An alien Christian's spiritual walk is carried out in community just as Jesus walked with his disciples. Reflection sheds light on one's spiritual pilgrimage; prayer is

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<sup>28</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 45.

<sup>29</sup> Peterson, *Working the Angles*, 101.

<sup>30</sup> Peterson, *Working the Angles*, 101.

<sup>31</sup> Peterson, *Working the Angles*, 150.



with one, the Scripture accompanies one, and one has spiritual friends. It is about discerning God's will together.

Christian ministry of resident aliens is, therefore, “the process of corporate discernment as a way of life in leadership.”<sup>32</sup> In this sense, discernment and articulation are “the capacity to recognize and respond to the presence and the activity of God - both in the ordinary moments and in the larger decisions of our lives.”<sup>33</sup> The story from John 9 is a good example. Jesus saw the blind man, and the disciples and the other religious leaders saw the man as well. They saw the same person differently. The disciples asked, “Who sinned, this man or his parents?” The disciples were only able to see this man from their limited presuppositions, and that was why they could only interpret this event as a matter of sin. They tried to make a judgment as if they were at a court to make a final verdict. They had no love, no compassion, and no empathy for this man. Their belief system was structured and settled so that their hearts only played within that boundary. However, Jesus replied, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned. This man was born blind so the works of God could be revealed in and through his life” (John 9:3). Jesus’ perspective was wide open such that Jesus interpreted the circumstances and this man’s life in a radically different way.

In this regard, Barton rightfully understands that spiritual discernment - on personal and corporate level - “begins when we’re in touch with our blindness and are willing to cry out from that place “my Teacher I want to see”... The most important step a group leader can take in becoming a community for discernment is to make sure that each

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<sup>32</sup> Ruth Haley Barton, *Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2012), 12.

<sup>33</sup> Barton, *Pursuing God's Will Together*, 10.

individual is on the journey from spiritual blindness to spiritual sight.”<sup>34</sup> Therefore, “discernment requires that first of all, they are able to discern matters of their own heart”<sup>35</sup> People were not able to see the blind man as a person or valuable existence, but just a sinner, a thing, and an object. However, discernment always requires one’s heart - personal and corporate level - to be involved. Only after this process, one can articulate the movements of one’s inner life and create space for others in one’s heart.

Discernment and articulation are much ever needed for alien Christians. They need to discern the movements of inner self as well as to articulate inner events. The Word and prayer in this regard are crucial for their spiritual formation. Furthermore, reflection facilitates and nourishes this process. These three angles invite them to enter the center of their existence and become familiar with the complexities of their inner lives. To pursue God’s will in their foreign land, they need to cultivate their hearts individually and communally. They need to admit that their inner world is very complex so that they realize greater need for God’s grace through the narratives of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. The words “discernment” and “articulation” are crucial spiritual disciplines for them. More than any other places in the world, the place where resident alien Christians live is full of noises. However, through reflection with the Scripture and with prayer, they can enter the authentic mode of discernment and articulation so that they may live their immigrant lives with some form of self-awareness and self-understanding. Jesus repeats, “You have heard...But I tell you” (Matthew 5). In this way, Jesus invites all resident aliens to enter his kingdom world of narratives permeated in his parables. In this way, he desires every resident alien to live a life to the full.

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<sup>34</sup> Barton, *Pursuing God’s Will Together*, 30.

<sup>35</sup> Barton, *Pursuing God’s Will Together*, 45.

## RESIDENT ALIENS AND NEW ERA OF CHRISTIANITY

1 Peter admonished early Christians, “Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us” (2:11-12). As mentioned earlier, *Epistle to Diognetus* (written between AD 130 to the late second century) identified them as aliens too, admitting while they lived in their own countries.

Hauerwas and Willimon revived this early Christians’ identity for modern day Christians by their book, *Resident Alien: Life in the Christian Colony*. However, they humbly admitted the book’s message was a part of growing symphony:

If the book (*Resident Aliens*) has struck a chord, it is because it did not start a new musical arrangement, but it fits into a growing symphony to which many have contributed, contributors as diverse as Lesslie Newbigin, George Lindbeck, Will Campbell, and others. In other words, we do not want the book to be seen as some startling new creative challenge, but rather just one voice that is meant to contribute to a community’s discussion about what it is and needs to be.<sup>36</sup>

Both say, in their book *Resident Aliens*, Christendom has fallen but it is a good thing for Christianity. The fall of Christendom has provided with another opportunity for the church to be more authentic in terms of embodying a social alternative. The church can now ask the right questions: “The theological task is not merely the interpretative matter of translating Jesus into modern categories but rather to translate the world to him. The theologian’s job is not to make the gospel credible to the modern world but to make

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<sup>36</sup> Stanley Hauerwas and Will Willimon, “Why Resident Aliens Struck a Chord,” *Missiology: An International Review* XIX, no. 4, (October 1991): 419-420.

the world credible to the gospel.”<sup>37</sup> In this new era, the church and the people in it are called to journey and adventure, as life in this day and age is never a settled affair: “The colony is a people on the move, like Jesus’ first disciples, breathlessly trying to keep up with Jesus.”<sup>38</sup>

A helpful way of looking at this Post-Christendom church is, as Douglas John Hall prefers, to think of the contemporary church as diaspora rather than as an institution.<sup>39</sup> This is positive reformulation than the resignation or defeatism of seeing Christendom’s end as chaotic. Diaspora is a dispersion of a people, so that it is all about people. In this Post-Christian opportunistic era, therefore, congregational leadership much more needs to be emphasized than ever before.

In line with these authors, Justo L. González, a church historian, also urges to understand church history with different perspectives. In his book, *The Changing Shape of Church History*, he develops the changing topography of church history, a topography in which people of color, women and the powerless emerge central to the discussion. The cartography is horizontal, while topography is vertical. Church historians of the past have usually concentrated on the mountain peaks: major (male) figures, events and movements mainly from North Atlantic regions. The result is an orographic church history – “without ever descending into the valleys.”<sup>40</sup> He argues that one must carefully listen to the voices in the shadowy valleys: the powerless, the marginalized, women, popular movements,

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<sup>37</sup> Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 24.

<sup>38</sup> Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 51.

<sup>39</sup> Douglas John Hall, *The End of Christendom and the Future of Christianity* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997), 3-4.

<sup>40</sup> Justo L. González, *The Changing Shape of Church History* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2002), 22.

etc. This topographical change means paradigm shifts: from center to margin, and from top down to bottom up.

Many Koreans live in metropolitan areas in Canada – Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal – and the majority are Christians. However, they often find they are neither Canadians nor Koreans, especially for second and third generations. They are often rejected by both groups. Nonetheless, González's arguments can help them reread and reinterpret church history as not only owned by North Atlantic Christians but also by wider believing communities of God in the world of minorities (from a Euro-American perspective). By having this paradigm shift, they can serve as a bridge between the two main cultures, as the Apostle Paul himself was a bridge between Hellenistic Jews, Judean Jews and Gentiles.

These authors' arguments urge a new pastoral leadership in the church as well as in society. Let us take one case from Korean theological students at Knox College,<sup>41</sup> the University of Toronto. In terms of curricula and programs, all M.Div. students at the college must take three church history courses: Early Christianity, Reformation History, and Presbyterian Church in Canada History. All focus on European figures and events. Sometimes the history of the Church of Scotland is emphasized, which is not a surprise considering the foundation of the college. Even though Korean students consist a large portion of the college's entire population, they have significantly less chance to study their own church history and their theologians. The college offers only one elective course on Asian theology, which 4-5 people normally take. The college's library has also few theological books written in Korean.

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<sup>41</sup> Knox College is a postgraduate Presbyterian theological college in Toronto, Canada. Its Korean students consist of about one-third or one-fourth in master's and doctoral programs.

In this sense, Korean theological students at Knox College – also at other theological institutions around the world – are unique: unique in terms of their feeling of disconnectedness between their theological studies and their praxis at local churches (they mostly minister Korean congregations that have largely different contexts than Canadian churches), unique in terms of their feeling of low self-identity between Korean churches in Canada and churches in Korea, and unique in terms of their feeling of separation between Korean churches and Canadian churches in Canada.

However, the similar challenges were always present in church history. If one does a historiographical survey of church history, it becomes evident. In church history until now, one of the main theological issues that Christians had to face was the relationship between the prolonged history of humankind and the message of the gospel.<sup>42</sup> Each period of church history struggled with the relationship between the gospel and history, such as: the struggle over Israel's understanding of its history; the struggle over the early church's self-understanding in a Greco-Roman context; the struggle between the gospel and the history of Germanic nations during the Middle Ages; and the struggle between the gospel and the history of the church during the Reformation and modern times. González in this sense envisions a better future of Christianity: globalized yet diversified world Christianity; worldwide universal that avoids particular ideologies being regarded as the center; and catholic (diverse) that embraces diversity and inclusivity in matters of gender, class, culture and race.<sup>43</sup>

The alien Korean Christian leaders live and minister in multiply different realities. However as mentioned before, this challenging situation can also allow them to serve as a

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<sup>42</sup> González, *The Changing Shape of Church History*, 87.

<sup>43</sup> González, *The Changing Shape of Church History*, 154.

bridge between the multiple cultures that share the riches of Christian tradition. Their ministerial and theological quest can be a dialogue in their practiced place in a foreign land. It is a dialogue in which not only the past and most North Atlantic major theologians address them, but also “they” who address the past, today’s context and particular ministry.<sup>44</sup> For these alien Christian leaders, the map of theology and ministry is a polycentric one that has many centers.<sup>45</sup>

This is possible when they become world Christians, with deep roots in their own multiple cultures, and when they become fully aware of contextualization in their theological training and praxis in ministry.

The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is a foreign place.<sup>46</sup>

Chapter Three has discussed some of the chosen academic and pastoral resources that are relevant to this current study in terms of the three main faculties for alien Christians’ spiritual formation: the Word, prayer and reflection. Furthermore, as this study explores the unique life context for Korean-Canadian immigrants as aliens in the foreign land, the chapter has also discussed some of the literature about resident aliens and how the theme has informed the current study project. Now the Chapter Four will explicate about the specific survey project’s research methodology and its design. Chapter Five will then illustrate outcomes from the survey.

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<sup>44</sup> González, *The Changing Shape of Church History*, 2.

<sup>45</sup> González, *The Changing Shape of Church History*, 12.

<sup>46</sup> Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 7, in Hauerwas and Willimon, “Why Resident Aliens Struck a Chord,” 421.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PROJECT METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

The survey was conducted with the purpose of exploring how the parables of Jesus have impacted on spiritual formation of young Korean immigrants in Canada. The survey was conducted with two different groups: *St. Timothy Presbyterian Church's* College/Career group and a university campus Christian group called *Ebenezer* at the University of Toronto. In order to determine what kind of teaching method is more effective, the first survey was conducted at an overnight retreat setting and the latter at a weekly summer Bible study setting, respectively. Before and after each event, a same survey was conducted to measure participants' spiritual change: Pre-Test & Post-Test. The following chapter will discuss the project methodology and design of the research.

### **PARTICIPANTS**

The total sample size of the first survey at the retreat was 9 participants, with the mean age of 24 years. The sample was comprised of 4 males and 5 females. Among them, there were 7 Canadian citizens, 2 with student visa, and none with permanent residence status. 7 participants were born in South Korea, and the other 2 in Canada. The mean duration of living in Canada was a little more than 12 years, while the mean duration of attending church was a little more than 17 years.

The total sample size for the weekly Bible study varied: 8 participants for the pretest and 5 participants for the posttest. All of 5 posttest participants attended the Bible



study sessions for 3 weeks and answered the pretest as well. Since the purpose of this survey is to analyze the participants' spiritual movement, 3 participants only for the posttest were not considered here.

Therefore, the total sample size for the posttest was 5 participants, with the mean age of 22 years. This sample was comprised of 3 males and 2 females. Among them, 1 Canadian citizen, 2 with student visa, and 2 with permanent residence status. 4 participants were born in South Korea, and the other 1 in Canada. The mean duration of living in Canada was 7 years, while the mean duration of attending church was 19.2 years.

## PROCEDURES

A preliminary survey was conducted in 2013.<sup>1</sup> The target was university students in a Korean-Christian campus group at *The University of Toronto*, called *Ebenezer*. During the first and second semesters, approximately 30 students attended the 18-week Bible study series on Jesus' parables. After the series, a brief questionnaire about participants' spiritual movement experienced through the parables was given out. It asked what specific stories resonated in their lives and why. This process was to collect more in-depth stories to discover participants' authentic spiritual formation. Therefore, a narrative inquiry as a qualitative research was developed afterward.

In terms of research methodology, the project was designed in two different but closely related ways. First, three parables of Jesus from each evangelist (Matthew, Mark

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A.

and Luke)<sup>2</sup> were chosen, such that are closely related to the target audience's unique context. The second way is that a special retreat program was designed with these parables to observe the following three: 1) how the parables empower them to interpret their identity with the perspectives of the parables to see their true self, 2) how the parables help form (or formed) their spirituality, and 3) how the parables open a door for them to take a journey to be continuously liberated from the mind of passive aliens and help them embrace their identity and live a celebrated life.

With the three parables, a three-week-series at *Ebenezer* happened in June 2014. The pretest<sup>3</sup> was conducted at the beginning of the Bible study to find out how participants currently interpreted their identity and context. At the end of the Bible study (three weeks later), posttest questionnaire<sup>4</sup> was conducted to find out how the parables impact their understanding of self, their interpretation about their identity as aliens, and how the stories have liberated them.

The Korean-speaking college and career group at *St. Timothy Presbyterian Church* went retreat in May 2015 at *Crieff Hills Retreat and Conference Centre* (the retreat center of the Presbyterian Church in Canada) and spent one night participating in the above-described program while engaging an in-depth Bible study and sharing session. The pretest and posttest questionnaires<sup>5</sup> were conducted in the same manner – the pretest before the first session and the posttest at the end of the last session.

In this way, it was expected to compare the two formats (overnight retreat and weekly Bible study) to find out some pros and cons, well as to suggest certain format that

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 20:1-6; Mark 4:26-32; Luke 15:11-32

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix C.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix B for the pretest and Appendix C for the posttest.

may fit the best for certain purposes. The language used for the Bible studies was Korean, while the participants were given the questionnaire in English but allowed to answer in any languages they preferred, Korean and/or English.

## MEASURES

### *Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale*

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)<sup>6</sup> was developed by Morris Rosenberg in 1965. He considered self-esteem as a component of self-concept and defines it as an individual's set of thoughts and feelings about his or her own worth and importance, that is, a global positive or negative attitude toward oneself.<sup>7</sup> RSES is a 10-item scale that measures person's self-esteem, both positive and negative feelings about the self. The scale is unidimensional and all items are answered using a 4-point Likert scale format, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. There are five reverse items in the scale. The scale ranges from 0-30, with 30 being the highest score possible. The higher score means the higher self-esteem.

Researchers indicate that self-esteem has a strong relation to happiness.<sup>8</sup> Even though there may be other variables, high self-esteem leads to greater happiness, while

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendices A and B.

<sup>7</sup> José Martín-Albo, Juan L. Núñez, José G. Navarro, and Fernando Grijalvo, "The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale: Translation and Validation in University Students," *The Spanish Journal of Psychology* 10, no. 2 (2007), 459.

<sup>8</sup> Roy F. Baumeister, Jennifer D. Campbell, Joachim I. Krueger & Kathleen D. Vohs, "Does High Self-Esteem Cause Better Performance, Interpersonal Success, Happiness, or Healthier Lifestyles?" *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 4, no. 1 (May 2003), 1.

low self-esteem is more likely to lead to depression under some circumstances.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, however, it must be noted that high self-esteem does not always lead one to good performance at school or work. It is a part of the good result, though. In terms of a cause of violence, researchers state as follows:

Neither high nor low self-esteem is a direct cause of violence. Narcissism leads to increased aggression in retaliation for wounded pride. Low self-esteem may contribute to externalizing behavior and delinquency, although some studies have found that there are no effects or that the effect of self-esteem vanishes when other variables are controlled.<sup>10</sup>

In this sense, self-esteem scale is better used in a limited way as one of many factors to analyze an alien Christian's way of understanding oneself. High self-esteem through any Bible study or retreat shouldn't be an end in itself.

### ***God Image Scale (GIS)***

The *God Image Scale*<sup>11</sup> is a subset of the *God Image Inventory* (GII). The *God Image Inventory* is a 8-scale, 156-item, psychometric instrument to measure the image of God, originally developed by Ana-Maria Rizzuto. She differentiated the God image from the God concept. While the God concept is intellectually conceptualized like mental-dictionary definition of the word "God," the God image is "a psychological working internal model of the sort of person that the individual imagines God to be."<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the GIS "measures the experiential and relational aspects of an individual's

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<sup>9</sup> Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger & Vohs, "Does High Self-Esteem Cause Better Performance, Interpersonal Success, Happiness, or Healthier Lifestyles?" 26.

<sup>10</sup> Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger & Vohs, "Does High Self-Esteem Cause Better Performance, Interpersonal Success, Happiness, or Healthier Lifestyles?" 1.

<sup>11</sup> See Appendices A and B.

<sup>12</sup> Richard T. Lawrence, "Measuring the Image of God: The God Image Inventory and the God Image Scales," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 25, no. 2 (1997), 214.

understanding of God, and was specifically designed to avoid measuring more cognitive and intellectual aspects of God,”<sup>13</sup> such as assessing the God concept.

The GII is a labor intensive process, because there are 156 questions to answer. The GIS is relatively less labor intensive because it is consisted of 72 items that are 4-point scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). However, due to significant inter-correlations among the scales, researchers may wish to use a shorter form of the GIS that has 36 items. This shorter form of the GIS contains the three scales with 12 items: *Presence*, *Challenge* and *Acceptance*. The benefit of this shorter form of the GIS is as follows:

Item scores are averaged to form scale scores, and higher scores on a scale indicate a stronger endorsement of a particular God image. In Lawrence’s confirmatory factor analysis of the shorter measure, inclusion of these three scales produced a clear three-factor solution, and the inter-correlations were reduced to more acceptable levels.<sup>14</sup>

God image has an impact on one’s self-image, or vice versa. Therefore, the GIS may be a helpful tool to assess alien Christians’ spiritual movement through the teachings of the parables of Jesus. God image, if not whole, is at least partly formed through one’s spiritual journey in a foreign land to maintain an acceptable self-image. If an alien Christian has low self-esteem, then it may be very difficult to have a healthy image of God who loves unconditionally and nurtures in every circumstance in one’s foreign land of immigration.

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<sup>13</sup> Lance S. Dixon, “Reaching Out to the Divine: An Examination of God Images and Prayer Functions” (PhD diss., Texas Tech University, 2014), 14.

<sup>14</sup> Dixon, “Reaching Out to the Divine: An Examination of God Images and Prayer Functions,” 14.

The first scale, *Presence*, explores issues of belongingness. It asks questions such as “I can talk to God on an intimate basis” and “God nurtures me.” This scale measure how much one feels God is available to him/her.

The *Challenge* scale contains items like “God takes pleasure in my achievements” and “God encourages me to go forward on the journey of life.” This scale then measures how much one feels God wants him/her to grow. If one has a healthy image of God who challenges, one may have an empowering secure base in the foreign land, allowing them to explore the new world and new challenges. Otherwise, one may have the fear of failure to try new things.

The *Acceptance* scale contains items such as “God’s love for me is unconditional” and “I am confident of God’s love for me.” These items indicate whether one has an image of God as being unconditional. This scale also measures how much one feels God loves.

The correlation between the GIS and its parent scale (the GII) is quite respectable as the alphas of the correlations between each GIS scale and the parent scale is between .81 to .95, “for research purposes alpha reliability estimates of .80 are acceptable and time and space are always at a premium.”<sup>15</sup> Richard T. Lawrence also explains why the GIS is a better tool for researchers.

The correlations among Presence-Influence-Providence and between Acceptance-Benevolence are still uncomfortably high, and factor analysis is still a messy tangle, with items for various scales loading on various factors. If only Presence, Challenge and Acceptance are included, however, an almost class factor solution results. Five factors emerge, with the first taking all the Presence items and one negative Challenge item; the second, all six negative Acceptance items; the third, all six positive Acceptance items; the fourth, all six positive Challenge items; and

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<sup>15</sup> Lawrence, “Measuring the Image of God,” 221.

the fifth, five negative Challenge items. Except for that one stray negative Challenge item, and the separation of two of the scales into negative and positive factors, it is very clean. This may suggest that researchers might prefer a 36-item form, using only the Presence, Challenge, and Acceptance items.<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, the GIS shows good test-retest reliability, therefore, it is a useful tool to analyze any changes of participants between before and after Bible study on Jesus' parables.

### *Narrative Questionnaire*

As mentioned before, the brief preliminary survey<sup>17</sup> was conducted in 2013 with a number of college students after the 18-week series-long of Bible studies on 18 parables of Jesus. The survey asked what kind of spiritual movement occurred and what parables resonated in their contexts the most. Afterwards, it was realized that a narrative inquiry to collect some qualitative data was needed to discern the participants' authentic spiritual formation/movement.

This narrative questionnaire involved trying to understand spiritual movements out of participants' narratives. Open-ended questions were included in the questionnaires. Some examples are "How do you understand one's spiritual journey is not a settlement but a movement?" and "Through the parables of Jesus at this retreat, have you noticed any changes in you? What are they, in terms of your understanding of the self, of God/Jesus and of community?"

Harry F. Wolcott writes three levels of analysis for qualitative data: description, analysis and interpretation. He explains:

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<sup>16</sup> Lawrence, "Measuring the Image of God," 221.

<sup>17</sup> See Appendix A.

*Description* addresses the question, “What is going on here?” Data consist of observations made by the researcher and/or reported to the researcher by others. *Analysis* addresses the identification of essential features and the systematic description of interrelationships among them - in short, how things work. In terms of stated objectives, analysis also may be employed evaluatively to address questions of why a system is not working or how it might be made to work “better.” *Interpretation* addresses processual questions of meanings and contexts: “How does it all mean?” “What is to be made of it all?”<sup>18</sup>

As quoted above, there are three levels of analysis for qualitative data. In this sense, the researcher will stay close to the data first as it was originally recorded. As the recorded data speak for themselves, the researcher will treat them seriously and then incorporate their statements into thorough analysis. After this process, the researcher will ask a question, “How will these findings help me evaluate the impact of parables for identity formation for immigrants?” In this sense, a qualitative researcher becomes a storyteller.

This chapter has so far discussed how the project was designed with two different groups – *St. Timothy Presbyterian Church’s* College/Career Group and the campus Christian group at the University of Toronto. The project was conducted according to two different settings to explore what kind of teaching method was more effective: over night retreat and weekly Bible study. To explore how the parables of Jesus have an impact on spiritual formation of Korean immigrant young people in Canada, three measures were used: *Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale*, *God Image Scale* and *Qualitative Questionnaire*. The next chapter will discuss findings from this project and explore how Jesus’ parables have an impact on spiritual formation of Korean immigrant young people in Canada.

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<sup>18</sup> Harry F. Walcott, *Transforming Qualitative Data: Description, Analysis, and Interpretation* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994), 12.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSION

This final chapter will analyze the project's results in relation to the three measures: *Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale*, *God Image Scale* and *Qualitative Questionnaire*. It will also discuss how Jesus' parables and one's spiritual formation are connected. It will then evaluate how differently the two Bible study methods helped participants see themselves as part of a diaspora on a spiritual journey together.

### RESULTS

#### *Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale*

As evidenced in Table 1-1 & 1-2, there were changes between pretests and posttests in both participant groups. It is considered that scores between 15-25 is normal, while above 26 is high and below 14 is low.

In case of the participants from weekly Bible study group (Table 1-1), the average change was 5.28% decrease. However, it should be noted that it was largely because of one participant's dramatic decrease of -50%. Other than this participant, it was 5.9% increase overall. In case of the retreat group (Table 1-2), the average change was 5.99% increase.

In both cases, there were no participants who changed one's self-esteem from one level to the other (e.g., low → normal). Over the period of the experiments, every participant stayed in the same level. However, it should be noted that majority of the

participants' self-esteem was increased somehow, such as 3 participants out of 5 from weekly Bible study group and 6 out of 9 from retreat group. The Bible study group's mean of increase was 10.65, while the retreat group was 18.6.

As evidenced in Table 1-1 and 1-2, there were somewhat significant differences between weekly Bible study group and retreat group in regards to changes in self-esteem scale. This seems to indicate that retreat setting was more effective than weekly setting in terms of changes in self-esteem scales.

Table 1

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale: ***Weekly Bible Study Group***

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Pre-Test</i>	<i>Post-Test</i>	<i>Percent Change (%)</i>
1	9	11	22
2	27	28	3.7
3	12	6	-50
4	16	17	6.25
5	24	22	-8.34
<i>Average Total</i>			-5.28

Table 2

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale: ***Retreat Group***

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Pre-Test</i>	<i>Post-Test</i>	<i>Percent Change (%)</i>
1	17	21	23.53
2	30	30	0
3	28	26	-7.4

4	20	23	15
5	18	17	-5.55
6	19	17	-10.53
7	17	18	5.89
8	23	26	13
9	20	24	20
<i>Average Total</i>			5.99

### ***God Image Scale (GIS)***

The *Acceptance* scale (Table 2-1) is the first of three scales of GIS measuring fundamental questions of goodness. This means that goodness under this category is not a moral one, measuring whether one did the right or wrong deeds in one's past or does in present. It is more measuring how much one has qualities that make one capable of loving and deserve love from others. The *Acceptance* scale answers foundational questions that concern oneself as well as God, such as "Am I good enough to be loved?" The average of weekly Bible study group's scores was increased 4.2%.

Table 3

Pre- & Post-Test Raw Score Differences of ***Weekly Bible Study Group*** on God Image Scale (GIS): ***Acceptance***

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Pre-Test</i>	<i>Post-Test</i>	<i>Percent Change (%)</i>
1	42	43	2.38
2	44	47	6.82
3	31	29	-6.45

4	36	35	-2.77
5	38	46	21.05
<i>Average Total</i>			4.2

The *Challenge* scale (Table 2-2) complements the *Presence* scale, both reflecting the issue of belonging. For example, *Presence* measures God as a safe haven, while *Challenge* measures God as a secure base. This category asks questions like “How far does God want me to venture?” If one scores very high, one seems to have independent personality, while low score dependent personality. The average score increased 3.37%.

Table 4

Pre- & Post-Test Raw Score Differences of *Weekly Bible Study Group* on God Image Scale (GIS): ***Challenge***

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Pre-Test</i>	<i>Post-Test</i>	<i>Percent Change (%)</i>
1	40	37	-7.5
2	39	40	2.56
3	36	37	2.77
4	38	35	-7.89
5	26	33	26.92
<i>Average total</i>			3.37

The *Presence* scale (Table 2-3) asks the most basic and fundamental questions, such as “Is God there for me?” Usually one with a higher score shows a better basis for personal and spiritual development. The average score increased 9.93%.

As evidenced in Table 2-1, 2-2 & 2-3 for weekly Bible study group, there were changes between pretests and posttests in all three categories: *Acceptance*, *Challenge* & *Presence*. Furthermore, it should be noted that *Presence* category increased the most while *Challenge* the least: 9.93% and 3.37%, respectively.

Table 5

Pre- & Post-Test Raw Score Differences of *Weekly Bible Study Group* on God Image Scale (GIS): *Presence*

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Pre-Test</i>	<i>Post-Test</i>	<i>Percent Change (%)</i>
<i>1</i>	33	33	0
<i>2</i>	33	31	-6.06
<i>3</i>	17	24	41.18
<i>4</i>	32	31	-3.12
<i>5</i>	34	40	17.65
<i>Average total</i>			9.93

The *Acceptance* scale of retreat group (Table 3-1) showed an average increase of 2.58%. However, compared to the same category of weekly Bible study group, however, the increase was lower (4.2 % vs. 2.58%). The *Challenge* scale (Table 3-2) and the *Presence* scale (Table 3-3) also showed an increase in average, 4.11% and 8.62%, respectively.

Table 6

Pre- & Post-Test Raw Score Differences of ***Retreat Group*** on God Image Scale (GIS):

***Acceptance***

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Pre-Test</i>	<i>Post-Test</i>	<i>Percent Change (%)</i>
1	34	37	8.82
2	37	40	8.11
3	47	46	-2.13
4	38	37	-2.63
5	38	36	-5.26
6	35	37	5.71
7	35	35	0
8	46	46	0
9	38	42	10.57
<i>Average total</i>			2.58

Table 7

Pre- & Post-Test Raw Score Differences of ***Retreat Group*** on God Image Scale (GIS):

***Challenge***

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Pre-Test</i>	<i>Post-Test</i>	<i>Percent Change (%)</i>
1	33	35	6.06
2	32	37	15.66
3	31	32	3.23
4	30	31	3.33
5	33	32	-3.03
6	33	35	6.06

7	37	34	-8.11
8	37	40	8.11
9	35	37	5.71
<i>Average total</i>			4.11

Table 8

Pre- & Post-Test Raw Score Differences of ***Retreat Group*** on God Image Scale (GIS):

***Presence***

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Pre-Test</i>	<i>Post-Test</i>	<i>Percent Change (%)</i>
1	22	32	45.45
2	30	34	13.33
3	34	33	-2.94
4	28	29	3.57
5	35	37	5.71
6	38	41	7.89
7	37	37	0
8	44	48	9.09
9	44	42	-4.55
<i>Average total</i>			8.62

Both groups showed an increase in average raw score between pretest and posttest. As evidenced in Table 4, the number of cases of increase were much larger than that of decrease (25 vs. 13). In addition, large score difference (3 or more) was higher in increases (14 vs. 3).

Under *Acceptance* and *Presence* categories, weekly Bible group's increases were higher (4.2% vs. 2.58%; 9.93% vs. 8.62%), while for *Challenge* category retreat group's increase was higher (3.37% vs. 4.11).

It should be also noted that among three categories, *Presence* category's increase was much higher in both groups. Through the course of reflecting on Jesus' parables, the participants' spiritual sense was increased, such as "God is here for me in this foreign land."

Table 9

Score Comparison in increases and decreases of both groups

Increased Scores	Cases
3 & more	14
2	11
0	4
-2	10
-3 & more	3

### ***Narrative Questionnaire: Open-Ended Questions***

The last contains open-ended questions. While closed-ended questions can be answered by a simple "yes" or "no," open-ended questions have no predefined options. They ask deeper thoughts, experiences, feelings and more colors but less structure. This method is typically ideal for qualitative type of research, like this thesis-project. Through



this format before and after learning/reflecting Jesus' parables, seven significant spiritual movements were found.

### **Movement 1: Dogmatic → One's Own Life Context**

#### *Weekly Bible Study Group*

For the pre-test, when asked how one understood certain parables (such as Matthew 20:1-16), one provided some dogmatic answers, such as "Salvation is only by grace of God,"<sup>1</sup> "No one deserves salvation for everyone's a sinner."<sup>2</sup> However, for post-test, the same person answered, "I realized that I have constantly compared myself to others while grace of God is abundant."<sup>3</sup>

When asked how one understood Matthew 20:1-16 for pre-test, another one wrote, "This story talks about how ordering works in heaven. It uses people (workers) and chronology to explain what we think (what workers think) makes logical sense. The story disagrees and suggests a different logic. And my bare mind and thought thinks like I am the first worker."<sup>4</sup> The same person answered for post-test, "This story is about people. Amount of work does not determine the reward. In our society, we think give = take, but give ≠ take in my life context. As an immigrant, I am the worker who arrived last."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Participants were given a choice to answer either in Korean or English. I put a note "translated" at the end of quote unless their answers were in English.

<sup>2</sup> Bible Study Participant 1, Pre-test, June 10, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Bible Study Participant 1, Post-test, June 24, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Bible Study Participant 5, Pre-test, June 10, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Bible Study Participant 5, Post-test, June 24, 2014.

*Retreat Group*

For the pre-test, when asked how one understood Matthew 20:1-16, one wrote, “This parable is like an analogy to those who serve God eternally and accept Jesus into their hearts at an early age. These are the laborers that worked longer. The new laborers worked less and obtained the same pay which can be compared to salvation.”<sup>6</sup> For the post-test, the same person wrote, “In real life, this is really unfair. But from a spiritual perspective, I feel that it tries to teach me something deeper. It teaches me to disconnect with my selfish desires of comparison and prioritize God’s kingdom only in my life context.”<sup>7</sup>

Another participant wrote for the pre-test how one understood spiritual journey is a movement, “Spiritual journey is more important than the outcome/result.”<sup>8</sup> The same person replied for the post-test, “My spiritual journey is a movement which is a continuous flow, alive (living) creature and has a direction like aviator.”<sup>9</sup> This participant came to church retreat for the first time and commented about one’s experience for the retreat in general, “I think this church retreat experience was quite different and unique. I really liked the fact that it was very practical and was a liberal [*sic*] approach.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Retreat Participant 8, Pre-test, May 17, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Retreat Participant 8, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Retreat Participant 9, Pre-test, May 17, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Retreat Participant 9, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Retreat Participant 9, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

## **Movement 2: Comparison → Community**

### *Weekly Bible Study Group*

For the pre-test, when asked how one understood one's identity through Matthew 20:1-16 (The workers in the vineyard), one answered, "I am like the workers who came late, thus I need to understand God's grace was given to me" (translated).<sup>11</sup> The same person answered for the post-test, "We are like the workers who came late but treated gracefully, thus we are called to treat others equally" (translated).<sup>12</sup> When another person was asked how one's view about community changed through the study, one wrote, "People categorizing each other and trapping others either inside or outside of the boundary. This perhaps is because we lack love towards others for God."<sup>13</sup>

### *Retreat Group*

For the pre-test, when asked how one understood one's identity from Matthew 20:1-16, one replied, "How much work and effort I gave to worship and serve God might not be equivalent to what God thinks from his standard,"<sup>14</sup> while for the post-test, "God's plan for my life may be different from his plan towards others, that I should not compare myself with others to feel superior/inferior."<sup>15</sup> When answering how the same participant changed in understanding community, the person wrote, "The society would be a better place if we can try to understand each other from others' perspectives as well."<sup>16</sup> Another

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<sup>11</sup> Bible Study Participant 2, Pre-test, June 10, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Bible Study Participant 2, Post-test, June 24, 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Bible Study Participant 5, Post-test, June 24, 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Retreat Participant 1, Pre-test, May 17, 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Retreat Participant 1, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Retreat Participant 1, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

participant shared for the post-test that the person realized all three stories challenged oneself to acknowledge God's love extends to all people, not to certain ones.<sup>17</sup>

One participant responded, "No matter what our conditions are, God always loves all and gives same chances, and I am more like the worker who came late because I was loved and embraced by God's grace (Matthew 20:1-16)" (translated), "Kingdom of God is and moves in me and embraces all people (Mark 4:26-32)" (translated) and "I used to compare myself with other people and complained a lot. Other people in community are not the ones to be compared but to go on a journey together (Luke 15:11-32)" (translated).<sup>18</sup>

Another person confessed that one's view of the self and community changed through the retreat especially in terms of letting go of one's desire for competition/comparison, saying, "God's love does not discriminate anyone and is offered to all abundantly."<sup>19</sup> Another participant wrote that through the retreat one began to see hidden feeling of entitlement within oneself and felt urged to deal with it.<sup>20</sup>

A different person also shared about one's identity from Matthew 20:1-16 that one didn't need to compare oneself to others but rather be grateful about God's grace given and walk on one's own journey.<sup>21</sup> The same person also felt urgency of being free on one's life journey by grace of God, not by bondage of fear (Luke 15:11-32).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Retreat Participant 6, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

<sup>18</sup> Retreat Participant 3, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Retreat Participant 6, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

<sup>20</sup> Retreat Participant 7, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Retreat Participant 8, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Retreat Participant 8, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

### **Movement 3: Own Effort to Grow → Understanding Mystery**

#### *Weekly Bible Study Group*

For the pre-test, when asked how one understood spiritual journey as movement, one replied, it means “we need to seek it ourselves,”<sup>23</sup> while for the post-test, the person answered differently, “It is a movement that I am not in total control of.”<sup>24</sup> For the pre-test, when asked how one understands one’s identity through Mark 4:26-32 (Growing seeds & mustard seeds), one wrote, “Even if I can’t see hope where I am, (I) trust that God is at work and stay where you are called to stay.”<sup>25</sup> However, for the post-test, when asked the same question, one wrote, “I am the one who God raises and nurtures. My growth is not necessarily in my hands, so trust God” (translated).<sup>26</sup>

#### *Retreat Group*

One participant wrote for the pre-test about life as a journey & movement, “I understand this statement is trying to tell us that we should not reside within what we can control but to go out and grow by facing the challenges out of the comfort zone.”<sup>27</sup> The same person answered for the post-test, “My life is filled with unexpected events. I should learn to accept these and how they can impact me to live a positive life.”<sup>28</sup>

Another participant shared that one realized from Mark 4:26-32 that one’s identity is not in control by oneself but is in God’s mysterious hands throughout one’s life

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<sup>23</sup> Bible Study Participant 1, Pre-test, June 10, 2014.

<sup>24</sup> Bible Study Participant 1, Post-test, June 24, 2014.

<sup>25</sup> Bible Study Participant 1, Pre-test, June 10, 2014.

<sup>26</sup> Bible Study Participant 1, Post-test, June 24, 2014.

<sup>27</sup> Retreat Participant 1, Pre-test, May 17, 2015.

<sup>28</sup> Retreat Participant 1, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

journey.<sup>29</sup> The same person noticed some changes in oneself about one's view on understanding God that grace of God is so abundant that reaches to all.<sup>30</sup>

After the retreat, another person said that one's understanding of self changed, "I still cannot understand myself fully yet. However, I guess that is the life which is a journey in continuous movement."<sup>31</sup> The same person replied for understanding community, "(I) do not judge people and do not categorize them, since I do not know where they are actually belonged."<sup>32</sup>

#### **Movement 4: Towards Bigger Heart**

##### *Weekly Bible Study Group*

When asked how one understood one's identity from the story (Luke 15:11-32) for the pre-test, one answered, "I am the first son who has been given everything but complains by comparing to others" (translated).<sup>33</sup> For the post-test, however, the same participant wrote, "I want to be like the father."<sup>34</sup>

Another person replied for the pre-test about how one understood one's identity from Luke 15:11-32, "I need to come as I am; I am a sinner, but God loves me" (translated).<sup>35</sup> This person answered for the post-test, "I really want to have the father's heart like a big ocean that can embrace complaints. I want to have this bigger heart that is not to be shaken" (translated).<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Retreat Participant 6, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

<sup>30</sup> Retreat Participant 6, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

<sup>31</sup> Retreat Participant 9, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

<sup>32</sup> Retreat Participant 9, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

<sup>33</sup> Bible Study Participant 2, Pre-test, June 10, 2014.

<sup>34</sup> Bible Study Participant 2, Post-test, June 24, 2014.

<sup>35</sup> Bible Study Participant 3, Pre-test, June 10, 2014.

<sup>36</sup> Bible Study Participant 3, Post-test, June 24, 2014.

### *Retreat Group*

When asked about one's identity based on Luke 15:11-32, one replied for the pre-test, "God has always been waiting for me to come back to him even when I went away from him, taking all of his gifts and talents."<sup>37</sup> The same participant replied for the post-test, "I should try to be the father by being understanding, kind, and the person with a warm heart."<sup>38</sup>

Another participant confessed that one's view of the self has changed, "I want not to judge people in the Bible but realized many similar characteristics are in me and began to admit them" (translated).<sup>39</sup>

### **Movement 5: Towards Proactive Spiritual Journey**

#### *Weekly Bible Study Group*

When asked through the course, what kind of inner changes one has noticed in terms of understanding the self, one wrote, "I am not just the one to be understood but who seeks to understand and the one who is called to embrace different kind of people" (translated).<sup>40</sup> When another person was asked how one understood one's Christian identity through Luke 15:11-32, one replied, "My Christian identity is on its journey and is constantly moving like the second son's identity."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Retreat Participant 1, Pre-test, May 17, 2015.

<sup>38</sup> Retreat Participant 1, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

<sup>39</sup> Retreat Participant 7, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

<sup>40</sup> Bible Study Participant 2, Post-test, June 24, 2014.

<sup>41</sup> Bible Study Participant 5, Post-test, June 24, 2014.

### *Retreat Group*

When asked how one's view of life as a journey changed through the retreat, one wrote, "A spiritual journey requires movement rather than settlement. We should always be grateful but never satisfied, not in worldly things but rather in our relationship with God. Our movement should always be towards God as we continue to seek his kingdom."<sup>42</sup> The same person added from Mark 4:26-32, "To rejuvenate my spirituality, I feel that I must continue to cultivate my relationship with God through scattering more seeds. This means that I should pray more and read the Word continuously."<sup>43</sup>

When asked if there is any change through the retreat, one shared the needs to press on to continuously grow in spirit and truth, saying, "I need to lay it (spiritual struggle) down before God and figure it out through prayer and meditation. I need to stop relying on others."<sup>44</sup> Another participant said from Mark 4:26-32 that one's view of identity changed, as one "needs to work the best in partnership with God's work."<sup>45</sup>

### **Movement 6: Self-Image in Other's Eyes → Self-Image in God's Eyes**

#### *Weekly Bible Study Group*

One participant answered about how one has changed one's understanding of the self, "This Bible study has made me think that I do not need to be too much conscious of the way other people are thinking about me. I need to sow seeds for me to grow" (translated).<sup>46</sup> Another person also answered how one, now for the post-test, understood

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<sup>42</sup> Retreat Participant 8, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

<sup>43</sup> Retreat Participant 8, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

<sup>44</sup> Retreat Participant 2, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

<sup>45</sup> Retreat Participant 4, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

<sup>46</sup> Bible Study Participant 3, Post-test, June 24, 2014.



about one's Christian identity, "In God, the smallest mustard seed became big so that even birds in the air took rest. I am small and weak, but in God I can be strong" (translated).<sup>47</sup>

*Retreat Group*

When asked how one's view about Christian identity changed from pre-test to post-test, one participant wrote, "I've always thought of myself as the worker who came in the morning (Matthew 20:1-16), but now I'm beginning to identify myself as the worker who came later in the day as I have begun to realize grace of God more in my life."<sup>48</sup> The same person also confessed that his understanding of self has "definitely changed as I identify myself very differently in the first (Matthew 20:1-16) and third parables (Luke 15:11-32)."<sup>49</sup>

For the pre-test, another participant wrote about one's understanding of identity from Matthew 20:1-16, "I don't have to waste my emotions comparing my bigger effort with others and feel being unfairly treated" (translated).<sup>50</sup> For the post-test, the same person wrote, "Sometimes I used to compare myself with others and complain, I can't calculate God's grace and many life events have been given to me for valuable life lessons" (translated).<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Bible Study Participant 4, Post-test, June 24, 2014.

<sup>48</sup> Retreat Participant 2, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

<sup>49</sup> Retreat Participant 2, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

<sup>50</sup> Retreat Participant 6, Pre-test, May 17, 2015.

<sup>51</sup> Retreat Participant 6, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

## **Movement 7: Community as Institution → Diaspora**

### *Weekly Bible Study Group*

When asked how one understood one's faith community after Bible study, one participant answered, "My community is not a building or place, but a space that moves continuously" (translated).<sup>52</sup> When asked how one understood the story from Luke 15:11-32, for pre-test one wrote, "I need to come back to the Father as I am."<sup>53</sup> However, the same person showed more spiritual interest towards others, thus answered for post-test, "Now I want to have the heart like the ocean so that I may embrace people who complain" (translated).<sup>54</sup> Another participant understood one's spiritual journey this way: "Many different events and situations occur through a person's journey. In order to understand and comprehend them, we would have to travel to different places, listen to others' opinions and experience something new. A movement is a necessary part of a journey to fully cherish and fill the person's spiritual life."<sup>55</sup>

### *Retreat Group*

When asked how one's view about community changed from pre-test to post-test, one participant wrote, "I think a community is like an organic movement and journey. It's like a tree that embraces all kinds of birds, no discrimination. People in my church are not for comparison but the ones with journey together" (translated).<sup>56</sup> Another participant answered the same question for post-test, "I used to think that church ministry is about programs that need to be effectively done. But now I think it's more about people. This

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<sup>52</sup> Bible Study Participant 3, Post-test, June 24, 2014.

<sup>53</sup> Bible Study Participant 3, Pre-test, June 10, 2014.

<sup>54</sup> Bible Study Participant 3, Post-test, June 24, 2014.

<sup>55</sup> Bible Study Participant 7, Post-test, June 24, 2014 (This participant didn't fully attend all three Bible study sessions).

<sup>56</sup> Retreat Participant 3, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

society is ever more competitive, but a church is different” (translated).<sup>57</sup> Another person wrote how one understood God/Jesus for post-test, “The grace of God is equally abundant. It is just and fair” (translated).<sup>58</sup>

## DISCUSSION

### *Limitations*

The sample size was relatively small: five for weekly group and nine for retreat group. For this reason, one participant’s response significantly affected to the average, especially for GIS. This small sample size did not allow changes in age, gender and age/gender interactions. However, these are the groups that are important to the researcher’s ministry context, as well to other ministry leaders in Canada for young Korean immigrants.

In case of the weekly Bible study group, participants’ responses had to be removed because they didn’t fully attend three weeks of Bible study. For the purpose of this study, only those who attended all three sessions were considered, resulting in the small sample size.

Furthermore, the score differences between pre-test and post test in Rosenberg Self-Esteem and GIS did not have definite boundary lines for the researcher to analyze score differences whether they were significant enough to consider actual spiritual change happened. Numbers tell a lot, but not all. In addition, it was hard to definitely say

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<sup>57</sup> Retreat Participant 4, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

<sup>58</sup> Retreat Participant 6, Post-test, May 18, 2015.

that “this method of Bible study was always much more effective,” even though there were differences.

Therefore, their narrative answers were more importantly considered, as they provided deeper changes in feelings, emotions and perspectives before and after the two methods. The questions provided opportunities for the participants to produce more creative responses, deeper self-expression and richness of details, thus yielding more information for their inner spiritual movements. In addition, in a situation that requires contextualization, complex description and explanation, a simple yes/no answer (Rosenberg and GIS) doesn’t help. As this study aims for finding inner spiritual movements (not necessarily actions yet), this method provides more adequate answers to the issue. As mentioned earlier there were some limitations experienced in the study, but the qualitative measure (narrative/open-ended) was sufficient enough to override some of those limitations, resulting in some very relevant and significant findings.

### ***The Two Methods***

In comparing weekly Bible study and retreat methods, the results from Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale show that retreat method was more effective in terms of the participants’ inner changes: -5.28% for the weekly method and 5.99% for the retreat method. However, when comparing the two methods in terms of GIS, the differences were negligible: both showed increases in changes.

It should be noted that GIS’s last category – *Presence* – showed the greatest increases in both methods. The participants experienced inner spiritual movements in that category the most. The *Presence* dimension represents belongingness: “Is God there for

me?” As alien Christians in the context of foreign life in Canada, the participants have felt isolated and marginalized. Some of them said they had a hard time to acknowledge God’s presence in this new land, while they felt it stronger in their home country. However, at the weekly and retreat settings, they interacted with Jesus’ parables and personalized those with their own life’s context. They were invited to actively engage in the stories and to be more self-reflective. Their own life stories/experiences were encouraged to be interpreted into the world that Jesus created in the parables. They were invited to pay close attention to their past and feelings, while thinking through some difficult questions for the present in their spiritual space at their peripheral place. In this way, they were able to acknowledge the presence of God in the past (home country) as well as in the present (foreign land). This increased sense of God’s presence through the medium of the parables was a liberating experience for their present, and it would give a new opportunity for their future as well.

Even though there were not significant score differences between the two methods in terms of Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and God Image Scale, it seems retreat method was more effective in terms of qualitative measure (open-ended questions). The retreat participants’ responses were much more personal, expressed deeper – often hidden – emotions and feelings, and showed more affirmative inner changes. Their responses were often repeated, such as: “I feel...,” “It deeply touches me...,” “It was liberating...,” “I realized...,” “I found this hidden (emotions)...,” “I can’t still fully understand yet...,” “I want to be like (the certain character in the stories)...,” “I now want to more cultivate my relationship with God...,” “My understanding of self has definitely changed through this retreat experience...,” “I noticed God’s plan for my life...,” and so on.

One reason is that participants spent more time with others (especially with the pastor) throughout the retreat so that they were able to discuss some issues from the parables, shared prayer topics and life experiences, and had more time to reflect upon their inner self as well as life's contexts. The weekly Bible study group, on the other hand, had much less time together, and their learning intensity was scattered throughout three weeks.

A retreat is effective because it is a time away from one's normal activities to spend time getting reacquainted with God, examine the priorities of immigrant life and to make some concrete and practical resolutions for spiritual growth. Jesus himself spent 40 days in the desert before he began public ministry, praying and reflecting as a way to prepare for the important ministry ahead. Furthermore, Jesus, in vision, directed Paul to go into the city, and Paul while blinded waited to receive spiritual directions for three days. During the retreat, participants were invited to an atmosphere of silence, as means for attentively listening to the Spirit and getting to know Jesus while getting to know themselves as well. They were encouraged to deepen their friendship with Jesus through his stories.

The effectiveness of retreat method may not be shown in the scores, but it is definitely shown in the participants' own storytelling.

### ***The Parables and Movements***

Based on the results of this survey project, a close correlation was found between the select three parables and the participants. The participants recognized their inner desires that were identified with the first hired laborers in the parable of *The Laborers in*

*the Vineyard* (Matthew 20:1-16), in terms of their sense of competition for success and entitlement in the new land. They were able to see their self-image in the eyes of God, not in the eyes of others, and also to sense the call of God in the parable to take their own unique immigrant life journey in remembering the companionship of the sufficient grace of God. The participants also reflected upon God's mysterious – often hidden – work in the small seed planted in their hearts and immigrant life contexts in the parable of *The Growing Seed and the Mustard Seed* (Mark 4:26-32). They also found that in their unique life contexts they would continuously struggle and wrestle on the journey. They were also able to see that this spiritual movement would empower them to take their journey more proactively and also to have hope with patience for their immigrant life to be fulfilled in God's time. Lastly, the participants recognized that in their life is God's call to be like the father portrayed in the parable of *The Compassionate Father and His Two Lost Sons* (Luke 15:11-32). They found the call to move from either the hearts of the younger son or the older son – or both – to the father's bigger heart.

In terms of Jesus' parables in general, it should be noted that a researcher may not expect the similar results as this current study if one chooses different parables, such as the parables about Israel (Luke 13:6-9 – *The Barren Fig Tree*; Matthew 21:28-32 – *The Two Sons*; Matthew 21:33-46/Mark 12:1-12/Luke 20:9-19 – *The Wicked Tenants*) and the parables about responsibility (Matthew 18:23-35 – *The Unforgiving Servants*; Luke 7:41-43 – *The Two Debtors*). Not every parable of Jesus tells the same message to different participants. Therefore, it should also be noted that different participants would more likely have different reflections from the same three parables since their life contexts have their own colors and trajectories. In this sense, it is required for ministry leaders to

carefully and prayerfully choose certain parables of Jesus with certain purpose/goal in mind for their unique participants in their ministry contexts.

All the participants in the current study were young as their ages were below 30. One person has never gone to church before, and a few of them expressed their disappointment in institutionalized immigrant church. However, all of them showed very high levels of spiritual interest in Jesus' parables. Many were actively engaged in a spiritual quest and in exploring the meaning and purpose of life as aliens.

Many shared their changes in their understanding of community. They used to compare with other people in their multi-cultural society, and this comparison easily led to competition. However, they responded that they realized they don't need to compete with other immigrants to prove who they are. Rather, they just need to live their alien life that was given by grace of God.

Their community also includes faith community, in this case immigrant churches. It is noted that even though they didn't explicitly use the word "diaspora" or "institution," some of them understood their churches as diaspora not just as institutions (see Movement 7). This is a helpful way of looking at their post-Christendom immigrant church context in their foreign land. Diaspora is a dispersion of a people so that it is more about people. In understanding their community context through the lenses of the parables, it is interesting that they showed more spiritual interest in people around them. They realized it is solidarity not separation, cooperation not competition, and unity not uniformity.

In this sense, they would be able to present more effective leadership in their community – both society and church – as their leadership is more fluid than



structured/institutionalized. They would be able to provide more organic leadership to people around them. As leaders, they would allow churches to be fluid and living organisms. Their community constantly seeks its own self-renewal, as all the living creatures do. Their leadership would provide some significant space in their community to be continuously renewed by the transforming of their mind (Romans 12:1-2). As alien Christian leaders, in their ministry, there is never a point where “I have it all,” but they are constantly seeking God and God’s call on their communal life journey together, as Apostle Paul says, “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me” (Philippians 3:12). Therefore, their alien Christian leadership remains fluid and organic, allowing God’s renewing work in their foreign land.

According to their responses and changes, it seems Jesus’ parables provided them space to sincerely reflect upon their identity, life goal and spiritual journey in their foreign land. Jesus’ stories invite them to live not just from moment to moment, but in true consciousness of their life context. The stories are shaping their unfolding life stories into a wonderful tale of growth, integrity, beauty and liberation. Their alien life stories used to be filled with competition, comparison, inferiority (sometime superiority) and resentment, but it seems something beautiful happened when Jesus’ alternative stories started filling those spaces. This is a liberating experience. In addition, they all admitted that this inner movement was not just for their weekly or retreat settings, but rather a life-long journey.

They responded that they were happy to see that their life is a journey and Jesus’ stories would walk with them. Life is in motion. Without movement, advancement and

progression, there will be no life. Once a thing has ceased to progress, it is dead. Their immigrant life is about growth, change, discovery, transformation and maturity. With a fervent connection with Christ and his stories, they move inward and outward, question and struggle in their land, and come to a more seasoned recommitment for the kingdom.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

In conclusion, this study has provided some important points of application to immigrant leadership in ministry. Spiritual formation involves movement and leads to spiritual growth. Spiritual growth doesn't necessarily mean something that is only applicable to the believing community but to their alien communities. Jesus' teachings – not dogmas but stories – provide some space for them to sincerely and honestly reflect upon. As spiritual formation doesn't happen overnight, they are invited to carry Jesus' stories with them on their journey.

Life is a journey. It is not about settlement, but movement. It is about growth, change, discovery, transformation, and maturity. Throughout this journey, they are shaping their life's unfolding story into a wonderful tale of growth, integrity, integration, beauty and triumph. Their life, thus, is a journey as well. Therefore, they are called "pilgrims" and "sojourners." This is their Christian spiritual journey, from birth to maturity, inwardly a fervent connection with Christ, upwardly a continual worship toward the Creator, outwardly a movement to the world, then questions and struggles, then a more seasoned recommitment.

In addition, as discussed in Chapter One, this journey is not just about a

movement from one place to another, like they immigrated from South Korea to Canada. Their journey was not just a spatial change, and nor will be. Their journey is more about identity. They are pilgrims on earth to the heaven, sojourners not settlers.

As Jesus lived in-between, in-both and in-beyond, they are encouraged to follow his way of life. This research project has shown that how strongly Jesus' stories provide them this in-beyond self-awareness/understanding that empowers their immigrant life.<sup>59</sup>

As discussed in Chapter One, alien young immigrant Christians often feel empty space in their inner heart while living in their foreign land. They are searching for something that may fill this void, longing for happiness, genuine love and purpose of life. Jesus' stories fill this void, as Jesus promised: "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10b).

The early Christians courageously took the journey as strangers and aliens in their foreign lands, while seeking their true homeland. As *Epistle to Diognetus* (circa AD 130) tells how the early Christians were known to their world, these young immigrant Christians in Canada can also be known to their present world in the same way:

For Christians cannot be distinguished from the rest of the human race by country or language or customs. They do not live in cities of their own; they do not use a peculiar form of speech; they do not follow an eccentric manner of life... They live in their own countries, but only as *aliens*. They have a share in everything as citizens, and endure everything as foreigners. Every foreign land is their fatherland, and yet for them every fatherland is a foreign land... They busy themselves on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey the established laws, but in their own lives they go far *beyond* what the laws require. They love all men, and by all men are persecuted... They are treated by the Jews as foreigners and enemies, and are hunted down by the Greeks; and all the time

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<sup>59</sup> Jung Young Lee, *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 71-72.

those who hate them find it impossible to justify their enmity.<sup>60</sup>

I pray that this humble study will be used for God's glory and purpose so that every alien young Christian will be able to continue one's journey in God's fullness through the stories of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>60</sup> Richardson, accessed September 17, 2017, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.x.i.ii.html>. (*Italic bold added*)

## APPENDIX A

### PRELIMINARY SURVEY

Name:

Age:

Circle: Student visa / Permanent Resident / Canadian citizen

1. “Spiritual journey is not a settlement but a movement.” We shared this statement often over the last bible studies on Jesus’ parables. How do you think this statement applies to your study and Christian life in Canada?
  
2. We studied Jesus’ parables over the last few months. Below is the list. Please choose 3 (1 being the most) that touches your heart and life’s reality, and explain why, in detail if you could.
  - 1) The parable of the unmerciful servant (Matthew 18:25-35)
  - 2) The parable of the running father (prodigal son) (Luke 15:11-32)
  - 3) The parable of the sower (Mark 4:3-20)
  - 4) The parable of the weeds (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43)
  - 5) The good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)
  - 6) The great banquet (Luke 14:15-24)
  - 7) The rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)
  - 8) Prayers of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14)
  - 9) Ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13)
  - 10) The wicked tenants in the vineyard (Matthew 21:33-46)
  - 11) The workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16)
  - 12) Talents (Matthew 25:14-30)
  - 13) The shrewd manager (Luke 16:1-13)
  - 14) The growing seed (Mark 4:26-29)
  - 15) The mustard seed (Matthew 13:31-32)
  - 16) The hidden treasure and the pearl (Matthew 13:44-46)
  - 17) The net (Matthew 13:47-50)
  - 18) The wise and foolish builders (Matthew 7:24-27)
  
3. From the list above, which parable(s) explains the best about your Christian identity (as a student visa/immigrant/citizenship)? Why so? (you can choose more than one parable)

## **APPENDIX B**

### **PRE-TEST**

**Spirituality & Self-Image Test  
Donghwi Son  
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary**

Background Information:

Age:

Gender: M / F

Status (Please circle one): Student Visa, Permanent Resident, Canadian Citizen

Identity your native country of birth:

How many years have you been in Canada?

How many years have you been to church?

Have you heard and/or read the parables of Jesus before?

### **Part I: God Image Scales – 36 Item**

You are being asked to complete an instrument to help gain an understanding of your image of God. There are no right or wrong answers. We just want to know how you honestly feel. Your answers will be completely confidential.

Please respond to each statement by circling the response that comes closest to describing your feeling:

SA, for Strongly Agree, if the statement is a particularly good way of describing how you feel about God.

A, for Agree, if the statement just adequately describes your feelings about God.

D, for Disagree, if the statement does not adequately describe your feelings about God.

SD, for Strongly Disagree, if the statement is a particularly bad way of describing your feelings about God.

1. I am sometimes anxious about whether God still loves me.	SA A D SD
2. I am confident of God's love for me.	SA A D SD
3. I know I'm not perfect, but God loves me anyway.	SA A D SD
4. I have sometimes felt that I have committed the unforgivable sin.	SA A D SD
5. God never challenges me.	SA A D SD
6. Thinking too much could endanger my faith.	SA A D SD
7. I can feel God deep inside of me.	SA A D SD
8. God's love for me has no strings attached.	SA A D SD
9. God doesn't feel very personal to me.	SA A D SD
10. Even when I do bad things, I know God still loves me.	SA A D SD
11. I can talk to God on an intimate basis.	SA A D SD
12. God is always there for me.	SA A D SD
13. God nurtures me.	SA A D SD
14. I get no feeling of closeness to God, even in prayer.	SA A D SD
15. God loves me only when I perform perfectly.	SA A D SD
16. God loves me regardless.	SA A D SD
17. God takes pleasure in my achievements.	SA A D SD
18. God keeps asking me to try harder.	SA A D SD
19. Being close to God and being active in the world don't mix.	SA A D SD
20. I often worry about whether God can love me.	SA A D SD
21. God wants me to achieve all I can in life.	SA A D SD
22. God's love for me is unconditional.	SA A D SD
23. God asks me to keep growing as a person.	SA A D SD
24. God doesn't want me to ask too many questions	SA A D SD
25. I am not good enough for God to love.	SA A D SD
26. I sometimes feel cradled in God's arms.	SA A D SD
27. God has never asked me to do hard things.	SA A D SD
28. God does not answer when I call.	SA A D SD
29. God feels distant to me.	SA A D SD
30. I think human achievements are a delight to God.	SA A D SD

31. I rarely feel that God is with me.	SA A D SD
32. I feel warm inside when I pray.	SA A D SD
33. God encourages me to go forward on the journey of life.	SA A D SD
34. God never reaches out to me.	SA A D SD
35. God doesn't mind if I don't grow very much.	SA A D SD
36. Sometimes I think that not even God could love me.	SA A D SD

### **Part II: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale**

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	SA A D SD
2.* At times, I think I am no good at all.	SA A D SD
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	SA A D SD
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.	SA A D SD
5.* I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	SA A D SD
6.* I certainly feel useless at times.	SA A D SD
7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	SA A D SD
8.* I wish I could have more respect for myself.	SA A D SD
9.* All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	SA A D SD
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.	SA A D SD

### **Part III: Narrative Questionnaire**

1. "One's spiritual journey is not a settlement but a movement." How do you understand this statement?
2. We are going to study three parables of Jesus during this retreat. Here are they. According to your best knowledge, explain what the stories are about and what the stories talk about your identity.
  - a. Matthew 20:1-16
    - About the story:
    - About your identity:



b. Mark 4:26-32

- About the story:
- About your identity:

c. Luke 15:11-32

- About the story:
- About your identity:

## **APPENDIX C**

### **POST-TEST**

#### **Spirituality & Self-Image Test Donghwi Son Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary**

Background information:

Age:

Gender: M / F

Status (Please circle one): Student Visa, Permanent Resident, Canadian Citizen

Identity your native country of birth:

How many years have you been in Canada?

How many years have you been to church?

Have you heard and/or read the parables of Jesus before?

#### **Part I: God Image Scales – 36 Item**

You are being asked to complete an instrument to help gain an understanding of your image of God. There are no right or wrong answers. We just want to know how you honestly feel. Your answers will be completely confidential.

Please respond to each statement by circling the response that comes closest to describing your feeling:

SA, for Strongly Agree, if the statement is a particularly good way of describing how you feel about God.

A, for Agree, if the statement just adequately describes your feelings about God.

D, for Disagree, if the statement does not adequately describe your feelings about God.

SD, for Strongly Disagree, if the statement is a particularly bad way of describing your feelings about God.

- |                                                                      |           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. I am sometimes anxious about whether God still loves me.          | SA A D SD |
| 2. I am confident of God's love for me.                              | SA A D SD |
| 3. I know I'm not perfect, but God loves me anyway.                  | SA A D SD |
| 4. I have sometimes felt that I have committed the unforgivable sin. | SA A D SD |
| 5. God never challenges me.                                          | SA A D SD |
| 6. Thinking too much could endanger my faith.                        | SA A D SD |
| 7. I can feel God deep inside of me.                                 | SA A D SD |
| 8. God's love for me has no strings attached.                        | SA A D SD |
| 9. God doesn't feel very personal to me.                             | SA A D SD |
| 10. Even when I do bad things, I know God still loves me.            | SA A D SD |
| 11. I can talk to God on an intimate basis.                          | SA A D SD |
| 12. God is always there for me.                                      | SA A D SD |
| 13. God nurtures me.                                                 | SA A D SD |
| 14. I get no feeling of closeness to God, even in prayer.            | SA A D SD |
| 15. God loves me only when I perform perfectly.                      | SA A D SD |
| 16. God loves me regardless.                                         | SA A D SD |
| 17. God takes pleasure in my achievements.                           | SA A D SD |
| 18. God keeps asking me to try harder.                               | SA A D SD |
| 19. Being close to God and being active in the world don't mix.      | SA A D SD |
| 20. I often worry about whether God can love me.                     | SA A D SD |
| 21. God wants me to achieve all I can in life.                       | SA A D SD |
| 22. God's love for me is unconditional.                              | SA A D SD |
| 23. God asks me to keep growing as a person.                         | SA A D SD |
| 24. God doesn't want me to ask too many questions                    | SA A D SD |
| 25. I am not good enough for God to love.                            | SA A D SD |
| 26. I sometimes feel cradled in God's arms.                          | SA A D SD |
| 27. God has never asked me to do hard things.                        | SA A D SD |
| 28. God does not answer when I call.                                 | SA A D SD |
| 29. God feels distant to me.                                         | SA A D SD |

30. I think human achievements are a delight to God.	SA A D SD
31. I rarely feel that God is with me.	SA A D SD
32. I feel warm inside when I pray.	SA A D SD
33. God encourages me to go forward on the journey of life.	SA A D SD
34. God never reaches out to me.	SA A D SD
35. God doesn't mind if I don't grow very much.	SA A D SD
36. Sometimes I think that not even God could love me.	SA A D SD

### **Part II: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale**

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	SA A D SD
2.* At times, I think I am no good at all.	SA A D SD
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	SA A D SD
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.	SA A D SD
5.* I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	SA A D SD
6.* I certainly feel useless at times.	SA A D SD
7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	SA A D SD
8.* I wish I could have more respect for myself.	SA A D SD
9.* All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	SA A D SD
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.	SA A D SD

### **Part III: Narrative Questionnaire**

1. "One's spiritual journey is not a settlement but a movement." How do you understand this statement now?
2. We have studied three parables of Jesus during this retreat. Explain what the stories are about and what the stories talk about your identity.
  - a. Matthew 20:1-16 (The workers in the vineyard)
    - About the story:
    - About your identity:

- b. Mark 4:26-32 (Growing seeds & Mustard seeds)
    - About the story:
    - About your identity:
  - c. Luke 15:11-32 (The running father)
    - About the story:
    - About your identity:
3. Rate the parables (1 being the most) that have best explained about your Christian identity. Explain why and how so.
- a. Matthew 20:1-16 (The workers in the vineyard)
  - b. Mark 4:26-32 (Growing seeds & Mustard seeds)
  - c. Luke 15:11-32 (The running father)
4. Through the parables of Jesus Christ at this retreat, have you noticed any changes in you? Then what are they?
- a. Understanding the self
  - b. Understanding God/Jesus
  - c. Understanding community (family, church, work, social group)
  - d. Any other comments?

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